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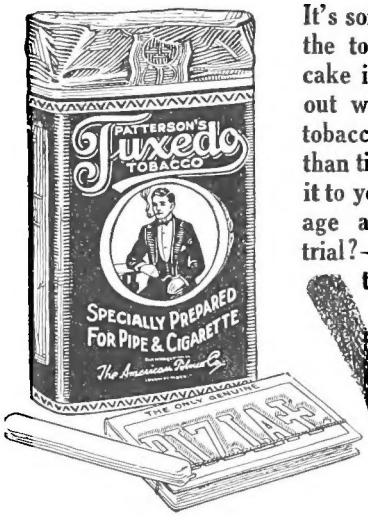

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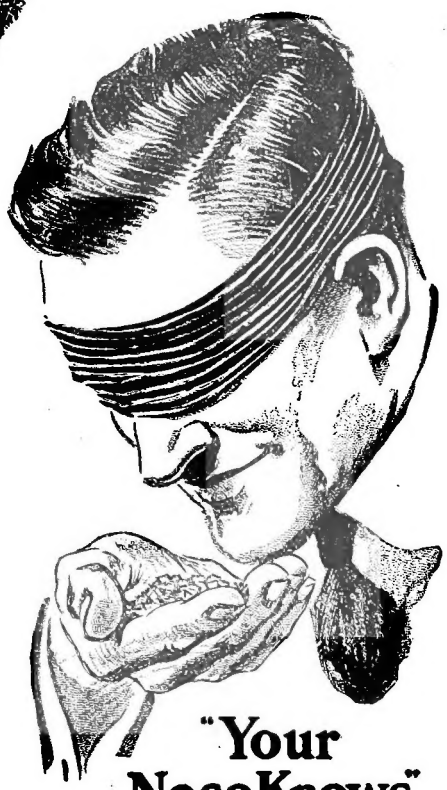

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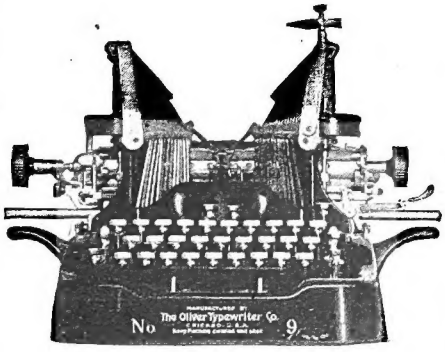

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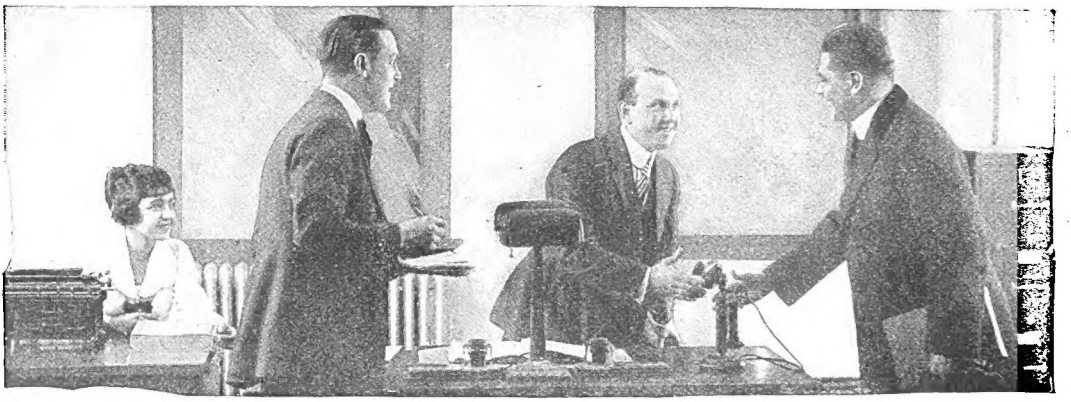

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ALL the office was talking about it, and we were wondering which one of us would be the lucky man.

There was an important job to be filled—as Assistant-to-the-President. According to the general run of salaries in the office, this one would easily pay from $7,000 to $10,000 a year.

The main requisite, as we understood it, was striking personality and the ability to meet even the biggest men in their offices, their clubs and their homes on a basis of absolute equality. This the firm considered of even more importance than knowledge of the business.

You know just what happens when news of this sort gets around an office. The boys got to picking the man among themselves. They had the choice all narrowed down to two men—Harrison and myself. That was the way I felt about it, too. Harrison was big enough for the job, and could undoubtedly make a success of it. But, personally, I felt that I had the edge on him in lots of ways. And I was sure that the firm knew it, too.

Never shall I forget my thrill of pleasure when the president's secretary came into my office with a cheery smile, looked at me meaningly, handed me a bulletin and said, "Mr. Frazer, here is the news about the new Assistant-to-the-President." There seemed to be a new note of added respect in her attitude toward me. I smiled my appreciation as she left my desk.

At last I had come into my own! Never did the sun shine so brightly as on that morning, and never did it seem so good to be alive! These were my thoughts as I gazed out of the window, seeing not the hurrying throngs, but vivid pictures of my new position flashing before me. And then for a further joyous thrill I read the bulletin. It said, "Effective January 1, Mr. Henry J. Peters, of our Cleveland office, will assume the duties of Assistant-to-the-President at the home office."

PETERS! Peters!—surely it *couldn't* be Peters! why, this fellow Peters was only a branch-office salesman . . . *Personality!* Why, he was only five feet four inches high, and had no more personality than a mouse. Stack him up against a big man and he'd look and act like an office boy. I knew Peters well and there was nothing in him, nothing at all.

January the first came and Peters assumed his new duties. All the boys were openly hostile to him. Naturally, I felt very keenly about it, and didn't exactly go out of my way to make things pleasant for him—not exactly!

But our opposition didn't seem to bother Peters. He went right on with his work and began to make good. Soon I noticed that, despite my feeling against him, I was secretly beginning to admire him. He was winning over the other boys, too. It wasn't long before we all buried our little hatchets and palled up with Peters.

The funny thing about it was the big hit he made with the people we did business with. I never saw anything like it. They would come

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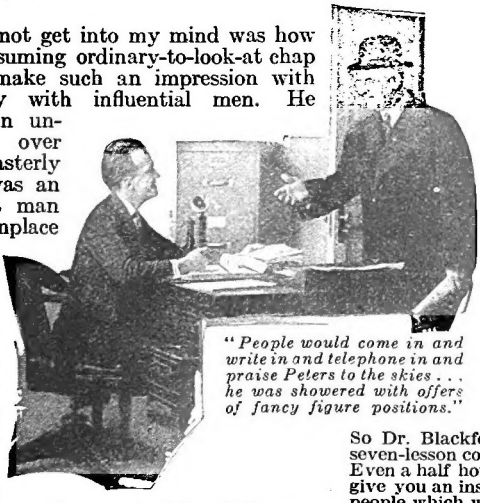
in and write in and telephone in to the firm and praise Peters to the skies. They insisted on doing business with him, and gave him orders of a size that made us dizzy to look at. And offers of positions!—why, Peters had almost as many fancy-figure positions offered to him as a dictionary has words.

WHAT I could not get into my mind was how a little, unassuming ordinary-to-look-at chap like Peters could make such an impression with everyone—especially with influential men. He seemed to have an uncanny influence over people. The masterly Peters of to-day was an altogether different man from the commonplace Peters I had first met years ago. I could not figure it out, nor could the other boys.



"People would come in and write in and telephone in and praise Peters to the skies . . . he was showered with offers of fancy figure positions."

One day at luncheon I came right out and asked Peters how he did it. I half expected him to evade. But he didn't. He let me in on the secret. He said he was not afraid to do it because there was always plenty of room at the top.

What Peters told me acted on my mind in exactly the same way as when you stand on a hill and look through binocular glasses at objects in the far distance. Many things I could not see before suddenly leaped into my mind with startling clearness. A new sense of power surged through me. And I felt the urge to put it into action.

Within a month I was getting remarkable results. *I had suddenly become popular.* Business men of importance who had formerly given me only a passing nod of acquaintance, suddenly showed a desire for my friendship. I was invited into the most select social circles. People—even strangers—actually went out of their way to do things for me. At first I was astounded at my new power over men and women. Not only could I get them to do what I wanted them to do, but they actually anticipated my wishes and seemed eager to *please me.*

I COULD tell you dozens of similar instances, but they all tell the same story—the ability to make people like you, believe what you want them to believe, and to do what you want them to do. I take no personal credit for what I have done. All the credit I give to the method Peters told me about. We have told it to lots of our friends, and it has enabled them to do just as remarkable things as Peters and I have done.

Which reminds me: One of my wife's close friends moved to another town where she was a stranger. My wife of course knew of my method. She told it to her friend with the idea that it might be of assistance to her in meeting new people. It helped her so wonderfully that in a very short time she won the close friendship of many of the "best families" in the town. Everyone wonders how she did it. But WE know.

WHAT Peters told me at luncheon that day was this: "Get Dr. Blackford's 'Reading Character at Sight.'" I did so. This is how I learned to do all the remarkable things I have told you about.

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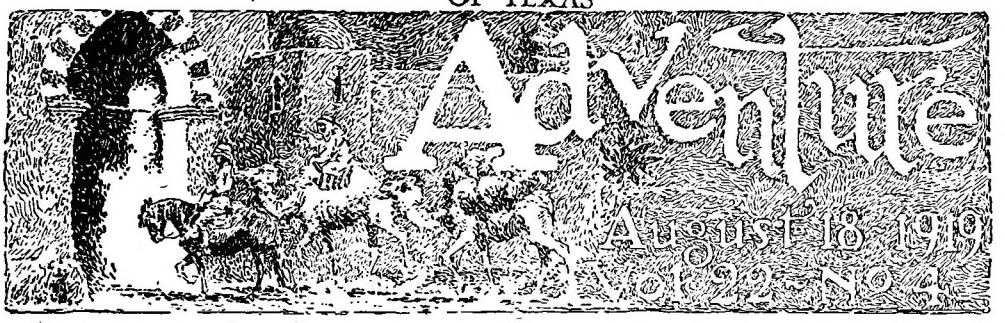

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Contents for Mid-August Issue, 1919

The Gift of the Barren Grounds *A Complete Novel* . . **Kathrene and Robert Pinkerton** 3

Secure in their tent on the edge of the Barren Grounds, while a furious storm rages about them, *Tom Gill* and *Jimmie Lad* believe themselves to be hundreds of miles from another human being—until a wild scream and the strains of "Annie Laurie" bring them to their feet in amazement.

Apron Strings . . . . . **Edgar Young** 71

It was while interpreting the messages of the busily clicking little key in a sleepy California railroad station that the big idea came to *"Barnsy."* That's why he sets out for the Gulf of California in a flat-bottomed boat.

Signaling Flags *Poem* . . . . . **Lambert Terry** 73

The White Frog . . . . . **Charles Beadle** 74

Five white policemen of the British South African Mounted Police stuck away with a batch of the native Black Watch in the heart of Central Rhodesia. And nothing to do but eat, sleep and sit on a rock. But that was before *Hugill* made his trip up Baboon Hill.

A Message for Haggerty . . . . . **Charles Wesley Sanders** 83

The best engineer on the road was *Haggerty.* An unknown flagman, just graduated from the coal-pit, was *Tomlinson.* So it was only natural that *Haggerty* should take the stand he did when he passed the flagman's signal and smashed up Eighty-Six.

Pariahs of Piperock . . . . . **W. C. Tuttle** 90

Smitten by remorse because they had deserted Piperock in its hour of need—the local option campaign—*"Dirty Shirt" Jones* and *Ike Harper* decide to return and take their proper part in civic duties. But, of course, they know no better; they have never been through a prohibition election before.

Undue Influence . . . . . **Robert J. Pearsall** 104

Partridge has suspected for quite a while that all is not right on the *Antioch.* So, when *Sanderson* confesses that he has been stripped of everything he possessed, the counsel he receives is a big surprize.

Savages *A Four-Part Story Part III* . . . . . **Gordon Young** 110

While *Williams* lays his plans on shore, *Willerby* starts his schemes on the *Bebe*—and so does *Lania Du Beque.* But, when *Williams* pays his visit to the yacht, he makes preparations to insure a proper welcome. If you have missed the first part of this stirring tale of the South Seas, you will find it briefly retold in story form.

(Continued on next page)

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(*Continued from preceding page*)

Tobey Riddle, Heroine of the Modoc War *A Bit of the Old West* . **E. A. Brininstool** 144

Riley Grannon's Last Adventure—and After *An Article* . **Sam C. Dunham** 145

Riley Grannon was a race-track gambler, and a bankrupt one at that. Many ministers would have been at a loss for words if called upon for his funeral sermon, but the sermon of the *Rev. Mr. Herman W. Knickerbocker*, preached before the rough bier in a Rawhide dance-hall, is one you should not miss.

Time to Go *Poem* . . . . . **Leo Hays** 151

On Bayou Noir . . . . . **Hermann Bacher Deutsch** 152

In far-flung Bayou La Barre, on the gulf coast of Louisiana, old *Valmont Basile* rules like an autocrat. But, when he tries to dictate to *Larry Lavigne*, he goes a step too far; alligator-hunters are not easily curbed.

Bumps *A Complete Novelette* . . . . . **S. B. H. Hurst** 160

When the *Shah Jehan*, from Calcutta, brings the stranger, *Sesson*, to the Andamans, his arrival creates considerable speculation. And the one who knows least about his mission and about the queer prisoner he interviews, is *Sesson* himself.

The Reservation *Poem* . . . . . **Lydia M. D. O'Neil** 175

The Camp-Fire A Free-to-All Meeting-Place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers . . . 176

Looking Ahead for Democracy 184

Various Practical Services Free to Any Reader 186

Ask Adventure 187

Firearms, Past and Present 188

Fishing in North America 188

Lost Trails 191

The Trail Ahead 192

Headings . . . . . **Will Crawford**

Cover Design . . . . . **H. J. Peck**

WEST AND EAST

IN A swirling fog of golden dust the stage dashes into town. Smash goes the axle—and "Lynch Lawyers" begins its opening scene. It's a story of the real West, with real cowboys in it—such cowboys as William Patterson White can write about so well. Five parts in all, and the first is in our First September issue.

THERE was a day when King Solomon brought his priceless cargoes there. Now it is the dirtiest port on the whole Red Sea. Only crazy men would want to land there, says the captain of the *Jean Marie*. But *Will Yerkes*, *Monty* and the others have their plans. "The Shriek of Dûm," by Talbot Mundy, in our next issue, is the best Up-and-Down-the-Earth tale so far.

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THE GIFT OF THE BARREN GROUNDS

A COMPLETE NOVEL

by Kathrene and Robert Pinkerton

Authors of "Penitentiary Post," "The Spirits of Spirit Lake," etc.

CHAPTER I

THE VOICE IN THE NIGHT

TOM GILL slowly straightened from the last of his evening camp tasks and looked across the little lake at the spruce-pierced horizon. Mechanically he filled and lighted his bedtime pipe. Through years of habit it had become his evening ritual, this silent tribute to the North country.

"Well, lad," he said at last, and he was careful not to look at his companion, "it's the real thing now. We're on our way to the oasis in the Barren Grounds. It's what we've talked about and dangled before you ever since you were able to hold a paddle."

There was a slight tremor in his quiet voice. He seemed to be embarrassed without cause, for he and Jimmie Lad had camped a hundred times as they were camped then.

Yet to the old woodsman that camp was epochal. For nearly a quarter of a century he had looked forward to it, planned for it, had awaited it eagerly and yet with a trace of anxiety. Now the preparations were complete. That day, after two weeks of steady toil, they had arrived at what he believed was the head of the Thelon River. The next morning they would speed northward down an unknown stream, straight into the heart of the Barren Grounds.

Ever since he and Marshall Wells, Jimmie Lad's father, had rescued Jimmie Dunn from a band of renegade Chippewyan Indians twenty-two years before, the three veterans of the land of no trees had planned this expedition. Jimmie Lad was a baby then, and as a birthright the discovery of the fabled oasis in the Barren Grounds had been saved for him by the three.

It is true that Samuel Hearne had been told of the oasis in 1771, had even seen two of the Indians who lived in that patch of timber far out in the arctic desert. A century and a quarter went by, and Jimmie Dunn, while a prisoner, also heard rumors of this unusual village. The Indians, he was told, were not as their Northern brothers. They provided for the future,

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never knew starvation and, isolated by the white waste, lived in complete ignorance of white men and their ways.

It had fired their imagination and they had resolved to reserve that last bit of unexplored country until Jimmie Lad was a man and could go with them. It was to be his introduction to the country which always had held first place in the hearts of the older men. And for them it was to be a farewell. None knew better than they how exacting their mistress could be. Although she gave generously to those she accepted, she asked much in return. They would make their last journey while they might go valiantly, asking no favors. Then an old age of memories, but memories few men can have.

It was of all this Tom Gill thought as he smoked his bedtime pipe. Slow of speech, embarrassed by his own emotions, he would have been glad if Jimmie Lad had said something to show his appreciation of the occasion. But that young man only nodded acquiescence and continued to study the map.

"What you looking at that for?" Tom finally demanded. "It's just white paper where we are."

Jimmie Wells chuckled as he tucked the map into its case.

"Guess that is why I was looking at it," he answered. "It is the first time I've ever had the feeling that I was going where some map-maker had not drawn every portage and marked every rapid. But I really wanted to see what elevation Tyrell has given to Dubawnt Lake. It's higher where we are and that means portages and rapids and a lot of them before we meet dad and Uncle Jimmie at the mouth of the Hanbury."

"What do you suppose they decided to split up that way for?" broke in Tom. "It's dangerous in this country."

"Didn't you get it?" grinned Jimmie Lad. "I did, the first thing. Of course we can cover a lot more territory this way, and there is less danger of our missing the oasis. But it's really their last time together in the North country. It's twenty-two years since they were up here. And now they're sort of living over the old days. You're missing a regular old-timers' convention. Too bad you can't be with them. Only they couldn't quite decide to let me make it alone."

"I guess you are the lad that could have done it."

Tom's comment was quiet, but it meant much. Unaccustomed to giving praise even when it was due, he had been forced to the tribute by his admiration of the competence of Jimmie Lad. In his embarrassment the old woodsman hurried to continue the discussion.

"Well, they may be enjoying themselves, and then again we may all pay for it later. It's dangerous splitting up that way. We all ought to have stuck together. Here we start into a country no one ever was in before and take the chance of meeting on the Thelon."

"Hearne was through here in 1771."

"Hearne!" exploded Tom. "Don't talk to me about him. That's all I used to hear from your father and Jimmie Dunn. And, as near as I can make out, he didn't know where he was within a hundred miles all the time he was going from Fort Churchill to the mouth of the Coppermine and back."

"He went through here, all right," affirmed Jimmie. "His map was off, but he crossed this district both going and coming. And I guess there's no doubt but that this is the Thelon. You ought to know, anyhow. You and dad went through here when you were hunting for Uncle Jimmie."

"That was north of us."

"But you hit the Thelon all right. They checked up that afterward, and Uncle Jimmie came up it after crossing over from Clinton-Golden Lake. I'm not worrying about that."

"You will be worrying before we get much farther," declared Tom, returning to his original topic. "You want to remember, lad, this ain't no little paddle like we used to take around that country north of Lake Superior."

Jimmie Lad did not reply. His silence troubled Tom, as similar silences had ever since they had left Lake Athabasca. Tom did not believe for an instant that this was due to fear on the part of his young companion. He had spent ten years training Jimmie Wells—or Jimmie Lad, as they had affectionately named the boy to differentiate between him and Jimmie Dunn—for this journey. He knew him, was sure of him.

Nevertheless, he was perplexed by these strange spells of silence. Jimmie was not

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moody. He seemed rather to be in a trance, whether laboring across a portage, paddling against a heavy wind or lying about camp after supper. There was a peculiar light in his eyes, a feverish anxiety in his movements. He was the first to crawl out of his blankets in the morning, the last to suggest that it was time to camp.

IN HIS mystification the old woodsman failed to analyze it correctly. He never suspected it was sheer ecstasy, that the young man was revelling in the thing of which he had dreamed since infancy, until Jimmie Lad replied.

"I know what you're driving at, Tom," he said slowly. "You are afraid that I won't recognize this as the real thing; that I can't tell the difference between this country and that I've been used to. But I understand. I know what you mean. You can get killed in a rapids down there or cut your foot with an ax or fall down and break a leg, just as easy as you can in this country. But down there you can most always reach somebody in a long day. You're pretty sure to find game and fish anywhere, and there's no chance to starve.

"Up here it's all different. South it's more than three-hundred-miles' paddle to the nearest white man. East you'd have to travel nearer a thousand by the only water-route. We're twixt the Indians and the Eskimos, in a country no one ever comes into. Since Hearne's time you and Uncle Jimmie and dad are the only white men who we know have been between the Dubawnt and the Great Slave Lake, and for a hundred years there hasn't been an Indian or an Eskimo in a district here as big as Montana."

Jimmie Lad suddenly sat up, his eyes bright.

"Think of it, Tom!" he cried. "Just you and I and no one else. No chance of meeting a human being. Dad and Uncle Jimmie don't count. They're over there on the Dubawnt going straight north, and there's no chance of our getting to them this side of the mouth of the Hanbury, more than two hundred miles of river from here. Way west, two hundred and fifty miles in a straight line, is the nearest Hudson's Bay post. A little nearer there may be a few Dog-Ribs or Chippewyans. North we might find some Eskimos. East, more than four hundred miles air-line, is Fort Churchill with Eskimos up the coast.

"Why, there's no other place on the continent where a man could be so much alone; where he would be so certain of not finding a living soul within hundreds of miles. And we're right in the middle of it, going through it, and we've got to kill our way, find our way, travel rivers no white man has ever seen, hunt up our own portages, take chances on strange rapids."

Tom could not answer. Relief overwhelmed him. For two weeks he had hidden a fear that Jimmie Lad did not like the Far North; that its distances and dangers, its interminable desolation, had struck into the young man's soul, had oppressed him and silenced him.

Tom knew that the Far North does not claim a man the first time he enters it. Rather she awes and frightens him, tests him thoroughly with her hardships and her dangers. Then, having weeded out the weaklings, slowly and subtly she weaves her mysterious spell. She becomes an irresistible lure, holds a fascination as compelling as that of any of the many lands which are the mistresses of men.

But Jimmie Lad had been ensnared at once. From the moment they had crossed the Height of Land above the head of Lake Athabasca, he had been her victim. That, not fear or misgivings or even sober realization of the dangers, had been the cause of his strange mood. It was not depression, but an overpowering elation, one that smothered rather than uplifted. He had known at once that he had entered his own land, the land that was his by right of training and inheritance.

"It's his dad in him," muttered the old woodsman as he began to remove his shoepacks preparatory to turning in for the night. "But Marshall Wells never had it like him, and—" this brought the elation of the preceptor's pride—"Marsh never was the man on land or water that his boy is."

Tom had not said all that he had planned to say on that long-anticipated occasion.

"I'm glad you like it, lad. I always knew you would. But there's something you want to remember. It's a mighty bare country we're going into. You'll think there ain't anything in it. I hated it at first. But it gave me the finest thing I ever had in my life, and I think your dad and Jimmie Dunn will say the same. It gave the three of us each other.

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"More than once it's seemed like the Barren Grounds would down us, but each time we pulled through, and we pulled closer together. It's only in places like we're going to that you get to see right into the heart of a man, and there's no greater gift than that. I'm saying this to you so you can see what it's meant to us and how we've planned on bringing you here, so's you'll be ready for what the Barren Grounds give you."

It was a long speech and a speech from the heart. It left Tom embarrassed, and he fled into the tent.

Jimmie Lad soon followed. It was still light. Not even the dusk had come, and there had been a hard day of portaging behind them.

"Darn this light," grumbled the younger man as he pulled his blankets over him. "It's the only thing I have against the country, the short nights."

"Wait until you get farther along," answered Tom. "The sun will hardly set at all, and there won't be any dark."

There was no answer. Jimmie Lad was asleep. A moment later Tom was snoring.

Men who have spent much time in the open can waken from a sound slumber with every faculty alert. There is no intermediate stage of bewilderment and confusion.

"That wasn't a wolf!" exclaimed Jimmie Lad as both he and Tom sat up.

It was dark, and the instant before they had been asleep.

"Lynx," was the confident reply.

"But it didn't sound exactly like one."

"You were asleep when it yelled, and the wind's blowing a gale, and maybe it's got a cold."

"I've heard a lynx too many times," was the retort, "and that wasn't one."

"Whatever it was, there's nothing to worry about," said Tom as he lay down and rearranged his blankets. "Only we're going to get a storm out of this that'll keep us in camp for a day or——"

A shriek as sudden and as sharp and clear as a flash of lightning brought Tom to his feet. Jimmie Lad grasped his rifle.

"If that wasn't human, I don't know what it was," he said.

"Oh, that was a lynx, all right," declared Tom when he had recovered from his shock. "Why, it couldn't be anything else."

Low, thick clouds filled the sky and made the darkness intense. Rain began to fall in large drops, hurled against their faces by the northwest wind, and they crawled back into the tent.

"But, Tom, you know it wasn't a lynx," protested Jimmie Lad excitedly.

As if to support his contention, the strange noise was repeated, though this time it was a low, long quavering wail.

"It isn't a lynx," admitted Tom slowly. "I never heard a noise like that in the bush before."

"It's human," maintained Jimmie Lad.

"It can't be. There's no human being within two hundred miles of us."

AGAIN he was refuted, and Jimmie Lad supported, when a clear soprano voice, rising and falling with the gusts of wind, began "Annie Laurie." It held both men dumb with amazement until, after a few lines, it died slowly away and only the wind was to be heard.

Even then they did not speak. They had heard. They knew they had heard. Yet the fact that such a thing was to be heard out there in the blackness and the storm, out there among the scattered, dwarfed trees on the edge of the Barren Grounds, was so incomprehensible that they could not accept the fact.

There had been a quality in the voice which even Tom recognized. The tones were so pure, the expression so perfect, there could be no doubt but they had come from the throat of a trained singer, a white woman.

The rain came down in torrents, and still they sat silently upon their blankets. Each was too greatly amazed to speak for a moment.

"Well, we are a couple of idiots!" Tom exclaimed suddenly. "It's a phonograph!"

"Phonograph!" repeated Jimmie Lad. "But that means some one is near here to run it."

"Of course. We're camped at the head of a little bay. North of us is a point. Some Indians came down the lake after we landed, and they're camped beyond the point and have started up their phonograph. Every bow and arrow in Canada owns one."

"Well," began Jimmie slowly, "you can call it a phonograph if you like. But I know it wasn't. I might make a mistake on a big expensive machine, but I never would on one of the cheap instruments the Indians buy. That was a human voice."

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"Well, call it what you like," agreed Tom; "I am not going to lose any more sleep over it. It's a phonograph, and tomorrow you'll find that there is a camp of Indians on that point. We ain't going to be so lonesome as we thought."

As he spoke, he pulled the blankets over his shoulders. In a moment he was asleep. Jimmie Lad did not follow immediately. He could not. There had been a quality in the voice that haunted him, called him. He felt that there was a woman out there in the darkness who needed him. He wanted to go out in search of her, to offer her assistance.

He started, but the first dash of rain in his face brought sober reason. There could be no white woman where white men had never been. Tom was right. Indians had dared this land so long unknown to them. He went back to bed, but he was still mystified, still strangely disturbed.

As Tom Gill had predicted, they were unable to proceed the next day. The wind still whitened the surface of the little lake, and the rain still drove before it. It was very cold, even though it was the middle of June, and sometimes the rain turned to stinging snow.

After the morning camp tasks were attended to, Tom Gill prepared for a day in the tent. There were bits of equipment to repair, clothes to mend and all the little jobs that are saved up for such a time. Jimmie, after a few moments of restless fidgeting, took up his rifle and went out.

"I'm going to have a look at that Indian camp," he said. "I will be back soon."

He sought the protection of as much of the stunted timber as lay in his course and pushed against the wind to the point. Back and forth he searched on the thin projection of land, but there was no sign of an Indian camp. He went on up the shore for a mile, but nowhere, in the brush or in the open, was there a sign that any human had ever been there before him.

Carefully, for he was thoroughly mystified, Jimmie Lad went over all the ground a second time. When at last he returned to the tent, he announced emphatically that no one had been within a mile of them the night before or at any other time that Summer.

"What do you make of it, Tom?" he concluded.

"Nothing, and I'm not worrying," was the reply. "It couldn't have been anything else."

In the daylight, and so long after the voice had wakened them the night before, there was nothing uncanny to keep Jimmie Lad uneasy. He helped prepare the evening meal, dried his clothes and talked of other things. While it was still light, they went to sleep.

Again, in the black darkness of the night, while the storm still raged, they were awakened by a shriek. Instantly both men sat up, alert, tense, silent. Then as before they heard the words of "Annie Laurie."

This time there was something irresistibly compelling in the voice. It rose and fell, sobbed, beseeched, at times became so low as to be scarcely distinguishable, then rose to clear, high notes which thrilled the listeners with their beauty.

At the end of the second line Jimmie Lad picked up his rifle and dashed out of the tent. Tom reached for him but was too late, and he received no answer to his shout of warning.

The young man ran straight toward the mysterious singer. He had no doubt but that the spot he sought was on the point he had searched in the afternoon, and his bewilderment drove him the faster, sent him crashing into brush, fallen tree trunks and over boulders. The rocks and moss were slippery, and often he stumbled and fell.

The song ceased, but he kept on. Then, almost at his side he heard a long, wailing shriek like that which had first wakened him. He listened, but there was nothing more except the sound of the wind, the splattering of the swiftly driven rain.

As Jimmie Lad waited, poised to advance or retreat, trembling with excitement and uncertainty, he heard a moan, then the murmur of a soft voice.

"Who is there?" he called.

There was no answer. The wind shrieked more loudly than ever among the stunted spruce. The rain blinded him completely.

In a lull in the storm he heard the murmur again.

"Who is there?" he repeated, at the same time pushing forward.

There was no reply, and, as he felt his way carefully forward, his outstretched hand struck a wall of rock that sloped inward. An exploring foot touched something soft.

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"Who is it?" demanded Jimmie.

There was no answer. He bent down and cautiously reached out a hand. It struck a woolen garment, told him some one was lying down in the shelter of the rock.

Again he spoke and did not receive an answer. He was sheltered from the wind and rain by the overhanging rock, which he remembered having seen in the afternoon, and then he struck a safety-match.

For a moment he cupped his hands to protect it. Then he held it lower, and as it flared up he saw the face of a girl, wet, bedraggled, her eyes closed, her skin deathly white, and yet her beauty surmounted all detractions.

CHAPTER II

A WILDERNESS MYSTERY

TOM GILL was inordinately proud of Jimmie Lad. For ten years he had been instructing him in all the arts of woodcraft, and sometimes when, despite his skill and long experience, the tutor was excelled by the pupil, the old Canadian rejoiced.

His greatest pleasure was in a quality of the young man for which no one could claim credit, however. He had taught Jimmie Lad to swing a paddle, to stalk a moose, to negotiate white water, to do countless things which are the daily lot of the wilderness traveler. But he had not taught him quickness of decision and coolness in emergency. That was an inherent quality, a gift from his explorer father.

So Jimmie Lad did not hesitate now when he discovered the unconscious girl beneath the overhanging rock. To have found an Indian there in the center of that great district which human feet never trod would have been extraordinary. To have discovered a white man would have been astounding. To find a beautiful girl, alone, unconscious, the singer of a sweet song, was something bordering upon the occult; was in itself so inconceivable, all sense of reality would be banished.

To Jimmie Lad, however, none of these things occurred. Here was a girl, unconscious, perhaps dead, a victim of exposure and starvation. He had found her. His tent was only a short distance away. The obvious, immediate thing to do was to carry her to the tent, where she could be warmed and fed.

He did not even waste time to determine whether life still existed. Before the match had died down, he had laid his rifle behind her, taking thought of a dry place for it. Then he tossed the match out into the rain and, stooping, picked up the limp body in his arms.

In the darkness and the storm, the wind and rain driving against his back, unable to see fallen timber and boulders, sinkholes or bog, Jimmie Lad went straight to the tent.

"Tom," he called softly as he approached. "Get up and start a fire. And give me a hand here."

"What's the matter?" demanded the old woodsman as he thrust out his head.

In the darkness he could not see that Jimmie Lad carried a burden.

"I found a girl, a white girl, lying under a rock," was the reply. "She's unconscious or dead; I don't know which. And we've got to get her warm and dry and make some soup. Hurry up."

Tom did not stop to ask questions. He possessed to a remarkable degree that quality which he most admired in Jimmie Lad. One step took him to the young man's side.

"Those clothes are soaked," he said as he felt her woolen coat and trousers.

"I know," said Jimmie Lad. "They've got to come off."

Both men hesitated. It was not modesty. Snow was mingling with the rain. The temperature was not far above the freezing-point. The girl's garments were dripping wet. Her body was chilled through. Her life depended upon prompt action, upon dryness and warmth.

It was of the girl herself that they thought, the rough old woodsman whose life had been spent in places where women were unknown, and the youth whose interests had always been in the great Northland. It was of the girl and her awakening, her thoughts when she recovered consciousness, they considered.

"You're her own age, about," said Tom.

"But you would be like a father, or maybe an uncle."

"Guess that's right. Get busy with the fire."

As they talked, Tom had assured himself that the girl was still alive. Then he spread back the blankets from which he had just crawled that the warmth might

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be retained. As Jimmie went outside to gather wood, the older man began to remove the girl's clothing.

It was not an easy task, even though she was dressed in men's garments with which he was familiar. She was limp, helpless, and her clothes were soaked and clinging. It was dark, too, for Jimmie Lad had not started a fire. But Tom worked quickly, if somewhat roughly, and in less than five minutes the girl was clothed in a spare suit of his heavy underclothing and wrapped in the warm blankets.

Jimmie Lad, for Tom's sake as much as for the girl's, had tried the impossible feat of starting a fire outside in the storm.

"Here!" called the woodsman as he staked out a flap of the tent door. "Build it here, where it will do some good. There's kindling under my blankets."

In a moment the blaze was lighting up the tent and a pail of water slung above it.

"Get out some of those patent soup things," commanded Tom. "It will take too long to make broth of that fresh meat."

They worked rapidly, Tom with the broth, Jimmie Lad bringing more wood.

"Think she'll pull through?" the young man asked when at last the pile of fuel satisfied him.

"Don't know," was the reply. "Wish we had a bit of Scotch."

"There's some ginger that will do the trick," and Jimmie Lad plunged into one of the duffle-bags.

When the drink was hot, Tom held the girl's head while Jimmie Lad poured the liquid between her lips. Much of it was spilled, but they got some down, and its effect was encouraging.

"If she can spit it out, she's not too far gone," commented Tom.

"She's getting warmed up, too. In an hour or two we can give her some soup."

Jimmie Lad built a large fire in the door of the tent and arranged the girl's clothing to dry. As he lifted her jacket, a flat package fell out.

"What is that?" asked Tom curiously.

"Looks as if it might be a photograph," answered Jimmie. "I'll put it here to give it to her when she comes to."

They piled all the bedding and duffle-bags around the unconscious girl. When at last they could do no more, they sat down before the fire and for the first time had an opportunity to discuss the girl's presence in the center of the largest uninhabited district on the continent.

"How on earth did she ever get here, Tom?" was Jimmie Lad's first question.

"You could make a hundred guesses, and any one would be as good as another," was the reply. "The only way we'll find out is to ask her when she comes to."

"But she never came alone. Some one must be with her or near here."

"You could make just as many guesses about that."

"There's one thing you can't guess about, and that's what is up to us now," retorted Jimmie Lad.

"You can make a dozen guesses there," said Tom. "Only we've got to remember one thing. We've got to get through to the mouth of the Hanbury without losing too much time, for your father and Jimmie Dunn are waiting for us."

"They can take care of themselves."

"Of course, but they won't so long as they don't know where we are. The first thing they'd do would be start looking, and Summer in this country is as short as a rabbit's tail."

"You think we've got to take her along with us whether she wants to go or not?" asked Jimmie. "No matter what she may want to do, or what's happened to her?"

"I don't say that. But we can't run chances of Marsh and Jimmie Dunn missing us and hanging around up there too long. They're getting old, lad, and they ain't the men they used to be."

"They're only fifty-three, which is two years younger than you are, and besides Peary was fifty-three when he got to the North Pole."

"I know, but they've spent the last twenty years in a city, sitting at desks and getting soft, and I've been in the bush all my life and kept fit."

Jimmie Lad knew that the old woodsman spoke the truth. He did not appear to be more than forty years old. The North had not taken its toll as it so often does. Most men age greatly after one Winter in the land just beneath the arctic circle, but Tom Gill had not been affected by cold or starvation or hardship. His vitality was remarkable, and his view-point was that of youth.

He was quiet, never given to exuberance, however. In fact, he always served as a

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check against impetuosity, and his unemotional, stolid attitude had been a good balance-wheel in the combination. The reality alone interested him. Conjecture he considered a waste of time.

CONSEQUENTLY, in their discussion of the girl who lay unconscious behind them, Tom refused to be moved by the romantic possibilities of the situation.

"Think of it!" Jimmie Lad had exclaimed. "Only last night we were talking of how completely we were alone here, and all the time she was back there on the point."

"That's something we hadn't thought of, too," interrupted Tom. "She was there that first night, for we heard her yelling and singing. And the next day you hunted the whole place over without seeing a sign."

"The rain would wash out any tracks she might have made."

Tom turned and looked at the face of the girl. It was still white and drawn. The eyes were closed, and the mouth was slightly open.

"Anyhow," he said after a moment, "we'll find out when she comes to."

Later they gave her another drink of hot ginger and were rewarded by a convulsive twitching of her body. Her eyelids lifted slightly but did not expose the pupils.

"You can see she's weak, starved," said Tom. "We'd better try some of the soup."

Jimmie Lad heated it, and, a spoonful at a time, they forced it between her lips. A few minutes later they tried again. The hot liquid scorched the girl's mouth, and she struggled to free herself from Tom's arm.

"Fine," he grinned. "She's going to come to soon."

They covered her well and resumed their seats before the fire. Tom had just lighted his pipe when they heard a sound behind them and turned.

The girl was sitting up in her bough bed, staring at them with wide, horror-stricken eyes. Her hair, still wet, fell down on either side of her face.

Jimmie Lad leaned forward involuntarily, about to speak soothingly, to tell her she was safe. As he did so, the girl uttered a shriek, sprang to her feet and, before either man could stop her, dashed past them, leaped over the fire and disappeared in the night.

Almost instantly Jimmie Lad was in pursuit. He could see nothing whatever once he had left the circle of firelight, but he was guided by the girl's continued terror-inspired screams. He ran swiftly, even when the shrieks suddenly stopped, and the next moment he tripped over a soft body.

He sprang to his feet at once and wheeled back to find the girl lying unconscious on the ground. He picked her up and started back as Tom called.

"I found her," he answered, and again he carried her to the tent.

"What do you make of that?" he demanded when the girl was again wrapped in the warm blankets.

"She saw us and thought we were some one else, some one she's afraid of," answered Tom.

"Yes," interrupted Jimmie fiercely, "and that means that some one has frightened her, has harmed a helpless girl up in this desolate country. We've certainly got to protect her, and, when we find out who it is, we'll——"

The sentence was unfinished, but his hands clenched tightly.

"But we don't even know that is true," replied Tom, "and we can't go jumping at conclusions. She'll be all right when she finds out we want to help her. And you don't know. Maybe she was just scared of what she thought she might find in this country. You know some folks have awful queer ideas of Indians and think that they go around carrying tomahawks. Let's wait and hear her story before we get so excited."

They resumed their watch, building up the fire and keeping the ginger and soup hot. When again they attempted to feed the girl, she opened her eyes, screamed and attempted to rise. This time they were ready, though it required the efforts of both men to hold her down.

"We won't hurt you!" gasped Jimmie Lad. "You're all right."

She only screamed and struggled the harder.

"Be quiet!" commanded Tom somewhat gruffly. "Nothing'll harm you."

The girl continued to scream and to struggle desperately. Then she suddenly relaxed; her eyes closed, and she fell back in their arms.

"Whew!" exclaimed Tom. "I'd as soon tackle a she-lynx."

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"Don't you understand?" whispered Jimmie in dismay. "She's out of her head, delirious, gone crazy from being lost."

Tom looked at her a moment.

"I guess you're right," he said at last. "She'll probably be all right in the morning. You get some sleep now, and I'll take a turn later."

But Jimmie Lad could not sleep.

"You try it," he said as he got to his feet.

Tom did not waste time in conjecture as to their strange charge. He was soon snoring, leaving Jimmie Lad alone with the unconscious girl.

The short night passed, and daylight came. The storm had died down, and there was only an occasional spatter of rain. For a long time the girl had not moved, and Jimmie Lad turned his back to build up the fire.

Hearing a movement behind him, he wheeled to see her sitting up among the blankets, her eyes open but staring at him without any expression or light.

He poured some soup into a cup and held it for her. She gulped it down, and the warm liquid seemed to have almost an instant effect. Color came to her cheeks; her eyes brightened, and her stooped shoulders straightened. Jimmie Lad watched her closely. It did not seem right to bother a weary and famished girl with questions. But, if she had a party or friends near by, they must take steps to find them at once.

"Are you lost?" he asked suddenly.

At the sound of his voice the girl looked up at him for a moment. She opened her mouth as if to speak and then cowered down between the blankets. The act was one of fear or bewilderment. For a moment Jimmie thought she might be dumb. Then the memory of the song in the night reassured him. Soothingly, as if he were calming a frightened child, he pulled the blankets up about her shoulders and went out of the tent to leave her alone.

Later, when he heard her moving, he brought in another cup of soup. He held it to her lips, and she drank it as she had the first. This time he tried another question, but he was careful to leave out any word which might renew her terror.

"Where did you come from?" he asked slowly, hoping that a calm and quiet manner might help her to regain her poise.

She gave him a vacant look and then shrank away.

The meaning was unmistakable. There could be no further doubt of her mental condition. Not only were they to have the care and protection of a strange girl on this journey, but they must go on without knowledge of her history, her companions or her destination. It was a relief to Jimmie Lad to see the first signs of Tom's awakening. He reached over and shook the woodsman's shoulders and motioned him out of the tent.

"She wakened!" he began excitedly. "And she drank soup. But she won't talk. She's out of her mind. Scared senseless."

"Out of her mind!" repeated the older man. "Then we won't be able to find out who she is or where she's from or where her party is?"

"Not right away, Tom. And we mustn't ask questions which frighten her. That will only make her worse. We can only keep her warm and nurse her back to strength. Then maybe she can tell us."

"We can't stay here to do it," interrupted Tom. "We've got to remember that your father and Jimmie Dunn are waiting for us, and, when we don't get there in a reasonable length of time, we don't know what they might do."

"But that would only be taking her farther away from her party. And we've got to consider her side of it, the more because she can't help herself."

"We don't know even whether there is any of her party left, and we do know where ours is," was the dogged answer. "We've got to act on what we know."

"Then you mean?"

"I don't mean anything right now, because she may come to and tell us. But, if she don't, lad, we've got to go on, and we've got to take her with us. I thought Jimmie Dunn struck the queerest thing that ever happened in the Barren Grounds that time he was captured, but we've struck something just as queer."

The two men stood there in silence a moment, looking in dismay and consternation at the unconscious face of their charge. Then Tom Gill exclaimed:

"Holy mackinaw, lad! Do you know what that may mean? We've got to take a crazy woman through the Barren Grounds, through a country where I wouldn't think of taking a sane one. And all the time we

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are a-doing it we won't know whether we are doing the worst or the best for the poor thing."

CHAPTER III

A QUESTION OF ETHICS

THE Far North is a land of the unexpected. And so it has become a land in which wit and ingenuity and indomitable will alone can conquer. It is this that has made it the land of the fighter, the land of the man who will meet great odds gloriously and victoriously, the man who thrills to the knowledge that he must make his own fate.

All this Jimmie Lad and Tom Gill had known and accepted when they entered its borders. They had thrown down their own safety as the gage of battle. And they would have abided by the results. But the life of another, of a helpless being who had not had the privilege of making her own decision, was a different matter. As they stood looking at the sleeping girl, each realized that to them had come one of the strangest, most perplexing problems that had ever confronted an explorer in the Barren Grounds.

Their journey was sufficiently difficult without encumbrances. They carried little food and equipment, expecting to live on game and fish. They were seeking their way through an unknown country, a district uninhabited even by Indians. They, as men, had chosen to make the journey, but it seemed unthinkable to expose this unconscious girl to its dangers and privations.

They were on or near the Height of Land, from which rivers flowed south to Lake Athabasca, west to the Dubawnt waterway, east to Great Slave Lake and north to Aberdeen Lake. With the exception of Samuel Hearne in 1771 and 1772, no white man had ever set foot in the district, until Tom Gill and Marshall Wells had crossed a hundred miles farther north twenty-two years before, when they had rescued Jimmie Dunn from a band of renegade Chippewyans.

They believed that the lake on which they were camped was one of the sources of the Thelon River, the stream they must find. Yet they might be mistaken and be led off to the west and Great Slave Lake or back to the east and to the Dubawnt. In either case they must retrace their steps, for ultimately they must descend the Thelon, be the first white men to travel the length of it, be able to place it accurately on the map.

Farther east, descending a stream mapped by Tyrrel in 1893, Marshall Wells and Jimmie Dunn were traveling northward to the junction of the Hanbury and Thelon Rivers, the appointed meeting-place. They were to turn east on the mythical Chamberlain River and search for the oasis there, while Jimmie Lad and Tom Gill were to look for it farther west.

When the two parties met there was still the problem of getting out of the Barren Grounds, one greater than that of getting in, for the rivers flowed north, and by far the longer part of the journey still remained. It was inevitable that Winter would catch them far North, but it was essential that they be within striking distance of a Hudson's Bay Company post when the worst of it set in.

That had been their problem before it was complicated by finding the girl.

"There is this much about it," said Jimmie at last. "We can't start today. She's too weak and needs food every hour or two. Besides, she might go off her head again like she did in the night and jump out of the canoe or upset us."

"Waiting another day won't hurt us," agreed Tom. "What bothers me is the folks she must be with. They can't be far, because she couldn't travel alone any distance. Not in this country."

"I know it," answered Jimmie Lad. "We can't just take her and run off. We've got to make some effort to find out about her party."

"How about that package that fell out of her jacket," suggested Tom. "It might tell us something."

"I guess it's all right to look at it," agreed Jimmie Lad. "It may help us to help her."

Jimmie Lad turned and went into the tent. In a moment he reappeared with the package. He removed the covering and drew out a picture of a young man. But, although he looked carefully, there was nothing more among the wrappings or upon the back of the photograph to tell them anything about either the man or the girl.

"Don't help much," commented Tom. "He's a well set up lad, though, ain't he?"

"It tells one thing," said Jimmie Lad.

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"It means she's married. This is her husband, and she was probably traveling with him."

"I don't see how you make that out."

"No girl would carry a picture of any one else, would she?"

"Don't ask me. I don't know. But anyway it won't help us any to find her party, and that's what I'm worrying about."

"It may help us to know that there isn't any of her party left to find," answered Jimmie Lad. "I wish we could trace her and find something that could explain her being alone."

"I'll look around a bit," said Tom. "We need meat anyhow, and I'll look for her tracks at the same time. I may not be back till late."

He went into the tent for his rifle. The girl was still asleep. The soup had brought color to her cheeks, and her expression was that of a child. The woodsman looked at her for a moment.

"Pretty, isn't she?" he said as he turned away.

Jimmie Lad did not answer but stood looking at her long after Tom had gone.

"She is pretty," he muttered at last. "And worth knowing, too, or she wouldn't have gotten into this country."

Early in the morning Jimmie Lad had started a kettle of caribou broth, and it was ready when the girl awakened. He poured some into a cup and carried it to her. For the first time it was not necessary to hold the cup to her lips. Instead she took it in her own hands and gulped it ravenously. Jimmie Lad, encouraged by this sign of returning strength, began to talk slowly and quietly.

"We found you in the woods," he said. "You were hiding under a rock. Now you are getting stronger. But you haven't told us anything about yourself. We want to know if you have friends who will be worried about you. Can't you try to think and tell us what happened to you?"

As the girl listened, a bewildered expression came over her face. She looked away for a moment, seemed almost on the point of speaking, then slowly shook her head and threw herself back on the blankets.

Jimmie watched her closely. He felt that there was danger of pressing a tired brain too hard, feared the consequences of bringing home too vividly the fact that memory and reasoning had failed. When he realized that her efforts to remember had been in vain, he pulled her coverings over her and patted her shoulder as one would comfort a tired child.

"Never mind now," he soothed. "After you have slept and eaten more, and when your strength comes back, you will remember it all. Go to sleep and don't try to think."

Whether it was his words or his gestures that she obeyed, he did not know. But she closed her eyes and almost immediately fell asleep. She no longer showed fear of him and his ministrations and seemed to know that she was among friends. Jimmie Lad could only hope that the comfort of that knowledge might restore her power to think.

He stood watching her as she slept. Tom's heavy woolen undershirt hung grotesquely from her shoulders. When she had eaten, one arm had been exposed to the elbow. It was thin and white. There were deep hollows above her collar-bones, and her cheeks were sunken.

"She's been starving for a long time," he thought. "And working hard, too. Her hands are blistered and calloused from paddling. Poor little thing."

Indeed, she seemed to Jimmie Lad only a tired, frightened child. With her lying helpless, starving, in a delirium from fear, he felt only a desire to soothe her and to take care of her.

There was, too, an appeal in the thought that she was dependent upon Tom and himself. Her fright upon seeing them for the first time, her flight from the tent in the rain and darkness, hinted at something more than physical suffering, suggested various possibilities. Mutiny of guides, the death of relatives in rapids or from starvation—these or something else undoubtedly had added to the effects of privation. If any of them were true, it meant that they two alone must be responsible for her safety.

When she wakened the next time, Jimmie brought her a little rice in her broth. At the sight of the food she showed animation and ate with almost no help. After her meal he brought her her own dry clothes, laid them beside her, pointed to them and went out and closed the tent. When he returned a half hour later, he found her dozing in the blankets, but clothed in her own garments.

At this new evidence of returning sanity he felt encouraged to resume his questions and sat down beside her.

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"You have been badly frightened," he began. "Perhaps, if I repeat certain words, they may mean something to you. If one of them does, tell me, if it is only to nod your head. Then I will know and think of other words related to them."

He waited to be sure of her attention and then said—

"Barren Grounds."

She gave no sign of recognition.

"Canoes. Guides. Hudson Bay. Canada."

Seeing that these caused no change in her vacant stare, he switched to cities. Slowly, distinctly he repeated the names of every city of note which he could remember in either the United States or Canada. When these proved of no avail he went back to things of the Northland.

"Rapids. Thelon. Caribou. Paddle."

These were no more successful. He thought of family relationships.

"Father. Brother. Husband."

He thought of the photograph and thrust it before her eyes suddenly. She only looked at it silently.

THROUGH it all the girl had watched him closely. Sometimes she had seemed to be making almost a painful effort to remember or else to understand what it was all about. After the last of his list and the trial of the photograph, she stared in bewilderment for a moment, and then her head went down upon the blankets in a gesture of either weariness or utter discouragement. Jimmie could not be sure which it was, and, fearful of pushing his experiment too far, he soothed her and urged her to sleep.

It was sunset when Tom Gill returned. He carried the greater part of a bull caribou upon his back.

"Find out anything?" asked Jimmie Lad before the woodsman could set down his burden.

"I did and I didn't," was the characteristic answer. "In a way we don't know any more than we did before."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, I went north along the shore of the lake and on to where the river leaves it. I'm surer than ever it's the Thelon, lad. It's a fair-sized stream, and it goes straight north. I saw it for a long way from the top of a hill, though that don't mean much in this country. It's just as liable to turn and go east or west or come back south."

"Yes, but the girl?" interrupted Jimmie Lad.

"Well, as we found her here, she must have come along this side of the river and lake from the north. We came from the south and didn't see any sign of anything. I kept going, went down the river about six miles from the lake. I quit when I found a canoe."

"Canoe!"

"Yes; smashed. Must have hit a rock in some rapids above there and then got washed ashore. It was a canvas canoe, made in the States. Wasn't a freight-canoe, but it was a big one. It was all stove in on one side near the bow, past mending for any one who didn't know how. From the breaks in the ribs and planking it couldn't have been more than three or four days ago."

"Anything in it?" asked Jimmie Lad.

"Not a thing, and no mark on it except the factory's nameplate. But the canoe showed what happened. It was too big for her to handle on a portage, and a broken rope tied to the bow told what she did. She tried to drag it up the rapids, and the rope broke. It wasn't much more than a string. The canoe was stove in and tipped over and she lost everything she had.

"I walked along the rapids and found where she had been. Those little hob-nails in her boots left marks. You could even see where she'd slipped when the rope broke. And the end of the rope lay there. After that, of course, she kept going south, the way she was headed, following the bank of the river and along this lake shore."

"And then she got to the point where she was too weak to go farther," added Jimmie Lad. "That's when she went out of her head and began to sing. But, Tom!" and he stepped closer and searched the old woodsman's eyes.

"What's the matter now?"

"You didn't find anything else, a pack or paddles or a pole or—or—or some one else?"

"No, nothing. What are you driving at? I told you all I saw."

"Then don't you see? That's what drove her crazy. And it must have been her husband."

"What in Sam Hill are you driving at?"

"Look here! In the first place we know it's impossible for a girl to be wandering

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around up here alone. She couldn't get in this far. It's impossible. Then, in the second place, you know what tracking up a bit of white water is. There's got to be some one in the canoe to keep it headed right, or it'll swing broadside and go over. The only way a man can do it alone is to tie a long pole to the bow.

"So you see what happened. She was tracking. The man was in the canoe with a pole, helping and steering. The rope broke; the canoe turned broadside, and he was drowned. That would be enough to make a girl lose her mind, knowing there was absolutely no chance of getting out and having her husband drown right before her eyes like that."

"You seem set on having her married," said Tom, and there was a twinkle in his eyes. "But what you say sounds reasonable, lad, only I can't believe it. That little girl in there never was married. You can tell that just looking at her face. Why, she's only a child."

He looked in through the tent door at the girl. Her hair, dry now, tumbled about her face. Her arm was thrown up in the posture most children assume, and her lips were slightly parted.

"She's just a little girl," Tom repeated. "Yes, what you say sounds mighty reasonable, lad. Her carrying that picture backs it up, too. But that don't make it sure. Just her being here in this country is such a strange thing that it must have been a strange thing that got her into this fix. It might be most anything. And, because that's so, we've got to do everything we can that's best for her and for any one who might have been with her."

"What do you mean?" asked Jimmie Lad.

"Well, supposing you're right. We've got to keep our eyes open for any piece of their outfit that floated down-stream and for the body, too. On the chance she was alone and some one is hunting for her, which is certain if she was alone, we've got to build cairns and leave a note telling all about it and where we're going. Then, if some one is looking for her, they can catch up with us easy enough, maybe long before we get to the mouth of the Hanbury. She looks a lot better tonight than she did this morning."

"Yes, she does," said Jimmie Lad. "Better color, more alert and a lot stronger. She has had soup every two or three hours and some boiled rice. I tried to talk to her. It was no use, and we must be careful with experiments like that because they do more harm than good. She just stared at me at first, and then she suddenly seemed to give way. Whether it was because she realized that she couldn't remember or whether she was just tired out trying, I couldn't make up my mind. But I knew it was time to stop. And now we'll let her sleep and just give her soup if she wakens."

"Yes," said Tom confidently, "a good rest is what she needs. She'll probably be all right in the morning, and we can talk it all over before we leave."

"Then you think we should leave?"

"We've lost two days now, and days count where the storms keep you tied up so much."

"I am still wondering," began Jimmie Lad slowly, "if it's the right thing to take her with us."

"You don't mean we ought to leave her?" Tom exclaimed in amazement.

"Of course not. But have we the right to take her on farther North? We can get back to Lake Athabasca from here without much trouble and over to Fort Chippewyan. You see, if she doesn't get better, we're taking her on a mighty hard trip, Tom. We're going to be in the Barren Grounds for a long while, and it will be Winter before we get out. It's going to be mighty cold, and there will be days at a time when we have little or nothing to eat. She could not stand it."

"You're right, if you don't think of anything else," Tom answered. "But we've got your dad and Jimmie Dunn to think about. If we don't meet them within a week or two of the time set, they're going off their heads, and they'd never leave the Barren Gounds until they found us. It would be sure death for them if we did as you say, while it's not sure death for any one to take her with us. She can stand it. If she got into this country here, she did some tall traveling. We know she didn't come by way of Lake Athabasca, which means she got in from Fort Resolution or Fort Churchill, and either one is a longer way than we've come and means some Winter travel.

"No; we've got to take her. If we get out, she will, and your dad and Jimmie Dunn will be with us. The other way means they don't—for you know them, lad.

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They'd hunt every foot between Hudson Bay and the Mackenzie before they'd leave without you."

"But if she doesn't get well, Tom—doesn't become normal again?"

"That's a chance we've got to take."

CHAPTER IV

SHADOW LAND

JIMMIE LAD had suspended a waterproof bedsheet from the ridge-pole of the tent, thereby dividing it into rooms. He had given the girl his own bedding and squeezed in with Tom.

"I hope she talks in the morning," he said as they went to bed. "It's our last chance to learn something before we start."

The two men arose early and began to prepare breakfast. They were startled and delighted when the door of the tent was thrown back and the girl came out just as the meal was ready. She returned no answer to their greeting and, on seeing them before her, stopped uncertainly, as if dazed. Jimmie Lad, realizing that normality had not yet come back and hoping by a matter-of-fact demeanor to bring her back from her shadow land, motioned her to a seat and quickly prepared her portion.

She ate hungrily. After she had finished, she held out her plate for more. It was only after her third helping that she lost interest in food and wandered down to the lake shore and sat down upon a boulder.

"Leave her alone," cautioned Jimmie Lad. "She may be trying to get hold of herself. We may make matters worse by keeping at her."

When the tent had been taken down and the canoe loaded, they called her. She arose instantly and took the seat indicated. She sat facing the front, and once when Jimmie Lad, who was paddling in the bow, turned quickly he caught in her eyes a different expression. But it was only for an instant. When she saw him looking at her, the same baffling blankness returned. If Jimmie Lad had attempted to describe it he would have said it was as if his own look of inquiry had quenched the beginning of thought, and he resolved that for the remainder of the day he would leave her to herself.

He was, however, unable to carry out this decision. When they passed the rapids where Tom had found the canoe, the woodsman turned their craft to shore. A look at the girl indicated his purpose. They landed in an eddy, and Tom led the way to the rock where he had seen the marks of her hobnails. They stood there for a moment, silently hoping that the sight of the rapids and the familiar place might bring some memory of what had happened to her. She only stared without interest, recognition or remembrance.

"It doesn't mean anything to her," whispered Tom. "We'll try the canoe. It's a couple of miles farther down."

When they reached the wrecked craft, emptied of water and dragged up on the shore by the woodsman the day before, they again led the girl up the bank. Each watched her expectantly, but one glance was all she gave to the disabled canoe.

Tom pointed to the staved-in bow. Jimmie Lad acted in pantomime the breaking of the rope, the dashing of the canoe against a rock, its overturning. She watched him for a moment and then turned almost wearily back to the canoe and sank down upon her place among the packs in her former apathetic manner.

"It doesn't mean anything to her," said Jimmie Lad.

"We'll never know until she talks," answered Tom. "There's just one thing to do, and that is to get along as fast as we can."

All day they followed the stream. Though it twisted and turned, sometimes to the east and sometimes to the west, it kept a generally northern course. Several times it turned into a lake, but they always picked it up again on the other side.

Three times that day they erected monuments at conspicuous places. Tom built the cairns, making each high enough to attract the attention of any traveler. Jimmie Lad wrote the notes, telling that they had found the girl in a starving condition and, being unable to learn any facts from her, were taking her with them and that they would join the rest of the party at the mouth of the Hanbury. There word would be left as to their route, whether by Fort Resolution or Fort Churchill.

The notes were wrapped in small pieces of oilcloth. They knew that these would not last long, but, if a party were searching for the girl, it would undoubtedly pass soon if it passed that way at all.

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That first day they crossed three lakes, and always the river kept on toward the north; always it grew larger.

"It's the Thelon, all right!" exclaimed Jimmie Lad when at last they made camp late at night. "We're going through a-whooping."

"There's no more chance now of it's running into Great Slave Lake," agreed Tom. "We're on the Thelon, and that means we'll get to your father and Jimmie Dunn without any trouble. But," and he looked at the girl.

As soon as they had landed, she had taken a seat on the rocks near the river. Though watching her closely, they could see no evidence of returning consciousness in her face. She seldom looked at either of them and then with a blank stare. Nothing that occurred around her seemed to register itself upon her brain. While the two men were busy, she sat near by, apparently in a trance or coma. When they wished her to get in or out of the canoe, to accept food, to enter the tent or to come out in the morning, she was obedient to their call or motions. But all this she performed as one who was asleep. They could command her physical movements, but her mind, her thinking processes, eluded them.

Physically there was a marked improvement, however. Her face became brown with the tan acquired before starvation had bleached it. The hollows in her cheeks filled out. She was stronger, sat more erectly, and she no longer slept during the day.

But nothing aroused her. She watched without interest when Jimmie Lad caught a large trout on a troll. She was unmoved when they floated between banks crowded with caribou for half a mile and when Tom picked off a bull for their larder. When the canoe was plunging through dangerous rapids, she sat quietly, even when the spray drenched her.

"She's just the same," whispered Jimmie Lad after they had gone to bed. "Doesn't seem to know anything or remember anything."

"Doesn't show any interest in anything but food," added Tom. "She must have been starved a long while. But worrying isn't going to help. The best thing we can do for her is to get to the mouth of the Hanbury as quick as we can. The sooner we get there, the sooner we can get out."

"Maybe she'll be all right when she has enough to eat," said Jimmie Lad hopefully.

THE next morning there was no change, however. She arose from her bed when she was called. She ate as ravenously as before. She sat apathetically upon a rock while camp was broken, and she obediently took her place in the canoe.

"She's just dead, except for her stomach," declared Tom the second night. "Nothing gets under her skin. If she was crazy, she ought to rave and talk foolish. But she don't. Do you suppose she's shamming?"

"It isn't that," declared Jimmie Lad quickly. "I know she acts like it. But she has everything to lose and nothing to gain by that. We ought to get her outside. This should not go on."

"Well, we will soon if this luck keeps on. I'd give any odds we're on the Thelon. And the going's getting better all the time. By tomorrow I can be sure of the river, for then we'll pass the place where your dad and I hit it that time we were after Jimmie Dunn."

To Jimmie Lad this thought contained more comfort than Tom knew. In the face of the woodsman's optimism that, as soon as the girl had recovered her strength, she would begin to talk, it was hard to say what he really feared. For the youth knew something of the difficulty of treating mental trouble. He realized that this was a case for an alienist, and the thought that their own clumsy efforts to awaken the spirit that slumbered might do more harm than good was disturbing.

As he looked at her inert figure, it seemed a terrible thing that such an experience should come to her. And he knew that, should her trouble be permanent, he would always blame himself for carrying her on into the Barren Grounds, for not taking her at once to some one who might aid. The more he went over the situation, however, the more certain he felt that they had made the only decision possible.

After supper that night the girl showed a disposition to sit beside the fire which they had built. To Jimmie Lad she seemed not quite so impassive as usual. Whether it was a mere physical reaction to the heat of the fire, he could not determine. Tom Gill, too, caught the difference in her attitude.

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"We might try her again with some of the things you did before," suggested the woodsman.

They asked innumerable questions, reeled off the names of every Hudson's Bay Company's post in the Far North, geographical points which meant much in the country. They mentioned the names of the managers of the most northern Hudson's Bay Company posts, lakes, men, Indian tribes, everything which might supply a hint to the dead mind of their charge.

None of it proved successful. She sat staring at the flames.

"Show her that picture," whispered Tom.

Jimmie Lad leaned over and drew the photograph from the girl's jacket pocket, where he had replaced it after his first attempt. She stared as he opened it, and then he suddenly held it before her eyes.

They widened instantly, but almost immediately they filled with tears, and she pushed it away and turned her head.

The men expected further evidences of recognition, weeping, grief, hysterical sobbing. But after a moment she only stared at the fire as before.

Jimmie Lad, in despair, resolved to attempt an experiment. He bent over the girl, lifted her chin in his hand, compelled her eyes to meet his and then slowly told the story which they had come to believe was that of her experiences in the two or three days before they had found her. He repeated each time the most familiar words, such as canoe, brother, husband, and intoned the word "drowned" again and again.

For the first time the girl seemed conscious of his presence, of the fact that words were being spoken to her. Thought, a desire to answer, seemed almost to quiver in her eyes. Then it passed, and the old blank wall seemed about to close between them.

Jimmie Lad saw it coming, and in his desire to ward it off he leaned forward.

"Don't let it come!" he implored. "Think! Answer! Just once! After that it will be easy."

For a moment she seemed to try to battle through the daze. Then it conquered. The girl threw herself back, covered her face and gave way to an agony of weeping.

Jimmie Lad, fearful of the consequences of his experiment, helpless before this trouble which wrung his heart, leaned over her. He patted her shoulder, tried to soothe and comfort her. After a while the sobbing ceased and the girl sat up in the same immovable attitude which had baffled all their efforts to help her. She wanted no more of his comfort or his aid. Jimmie Lad realized this and turned to Tom.

"She tried," he said huskily, "and she could not make it. We must never do that again. It's dangerous. She must never feel that she can't remember."

Tom said nothing. His eyes were wet. Physical aid he could have offered in any predicament in the wilderness. But against this he was powerless.

Afterward there was an added gentleness in their treatment of the girl, but neither ever suggested that they again attempt to awaken the slumbering memory.

Their mysterious charge caused no trouble whatever. Tom and Jimmie did not have quite so much bedding as they had had, but that was all. They had been catching fish and shooting caribou when needed, and they had not had to deny themselves food. The girl's weight in the canoe was of little consequence so long as they had the current helping them and she had no duffle.

But their anxiety had a much more wearying effect than added physical burdens would have done. They had begun to realize that nothing they might do could help her and that her sanity depended on outside aid. Each small delay became more irritating in consequence, and the desire to make speed left them each night weary in mind and body. Tom described it one night when he pulled up his blankets with a sigh and said—

"We paddle with our arms and push all day with our heads."

Even Jimmie Lad's work of mapping the river was slighted. They thought only of haste. They wanted only to get on, to bring the final end of the journey nearer. If they crossed a lake, Jimmie Lad drew a circle. If the river bent to the east or west, he drew it so on his chart, but he guessed roughly at distances, and often he forgot bends and tributaries completely. Only in ascertaining the latitude each noon was he careful.

And Tom never allowed their desire for haste to interfere with the building of a cairn twice each day.

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EARLY in the morning of the third day of their journey with the girl Tom Gill turned the canoe toward the eastern bank of the river.

"See that old blaze on the spruce there?" he asked.

Jimmie Lad nodded.

"I made that twenty-two years ago. When your father and I were looking for Jimmie Dunn, we came through from the Dubawnt and struck this river right here, and this is the Thelon. It won't be far now till we hit the river that we went up coming in from the west. We're sure doing fine."

They paddled swiftly and before ten o'clock passed the river Tom had spoken of. On the point between the two streams was a heap of rocks most evidently hand-raised.

"Jimmie Dunn built that and hid a note in it; only the Indians stole it," Tom said. "We went down a ways farther when we were chasing the Indians, and after that it's unknown river."

Since morning trees had begun to dwindle both in size and number. Great, bare patches were seen on either side of the river, and by noon they were fairly out in the Barren Grounds. There was still driftwood along the shores, and occasionally a small grove of dwarfed spruce was to be seen close to the river. Otherwise there was nothing except the moss and the Barren Ground plants.

The Thelon was now a large river. Streams flowed in constantly from either side, and the current was so swift they dashed on into the North with flying paddles. There were rapids, but none that gave them trouble.

"Why, we'll get there in two more days, or less!" cried Jimmie Lad. "This is just like sliding down-hill. We may beat father and Uncle Jimmie."

At noon they stopped beside a small grove of stunted spruce for lunch and to permit Jimmie Lad to shoot the sun. Below them the river took a sharp bend toward the west around a high point of rock which hid the bank on their side fifty yards away.

Tom began preparations for the meal as soon as they had landed, while Jimmie Lad took his sextant a hundred yards back from the river and beyond the small patch of timber. The girl, as usual, sat motionless upon a boulder near where Tom had built his fire.

Jimmie Lad was squinting through his instrument; Tom was hanging a kettle of water over the blaze for tea, when each was whirled about by a terrified scream from the girl. They saw her standing on the bank of the river staring down-stream, and she shrieked and shrieked again.

Before either could look in the direction of her gaze, she turned and ran toward Tom.

"Don't let them get me!" she cried. "Oh, don't let them get me!"

She reached Tom's side, darted behind him and clung frantically to his waist.

"Don't let them come!" she pleaded. "They killed Mark, and they want to kill me!"

Tom looked down-river to see a canoe coming up-stream near the bank and within twenty yards of their own. It was manned by three men, evidently half-breeds, who were staring in amazement.

"What's up?" demanded Jimmie Lad, who had dropped his sextant and rushed to the spot at the girl's first scream.

"She's acting just like she did the first time she came to and saw us," answered Tom. "I guess she thinks any stranger is going to hurt her."

"No! No!" cried the girl. "They're my men. They killed Mark, and they planned to kill me. I ran away. Look! Look! Oh! It's too late!"

She pointed toward the river, and Tom and Jimmie Lad looked to see the strange canoe darting toward their own. Neither had ever seen its occupants before, but their attitude was unmistakably hostile.

Instantly Jimmie Lad started forward. Before he was half-way to the water, the three men had reached his own craft and pulled it off the bank.

In it was all the equipment Tom and Jimmie Lad had, with the exception of a few cooking-utensils and the little food Tom had carried up the bank. Even their rifles and all the ammunition, so indispensable to their existence, were in the canoe.

The thought added speed to Jimmie Lad's movements, but before he could reach the river one of the strangers had picked up a rifle and held it ready. The other two pulled the stolen canoe alongside, quickly passed a rope beneath a thwart and then grasped their paddles.

The approach of the strangers, their sudden rush and capture of the canoe, had all happened so swiftly and with so little warning there seemed to be nothing Jimmie Lad could do. He stood on the bank unarmed,

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facing three men with rifles. But he did not hesitate. He stooped, grasped a large, round boulder and, crouching like a shot-putter, hurled it at the invaders' craft.

The current had turned both canoes so that their bows were toward Jimmie Lad. The man on guard lifted his rifle quickly, but the rock was already in flight, and before he could fire he was forced to duck his head. The boulder barely missed him and struck the bottom of the canoe directly behind.

An excited chatter and a quick scramble on the part of the three men told Jimmie Lad of his success. He had burst a hole in the canoe, and it was sinking under them. He jumped at once into the river and waded out, taking advantage of the surprize his unexpected attack had caused. The water reached to his waist, to his armpits, and still the canoes were ten feet away.

Jimmie Lad could not give up. The water was little above the freezing-point, but he made a last leap from the bottom and struck out.

The three strangers were scrambling from their own canoe into the captured craft as Jimmie reached it. He thrust up one hand and pulled his own rifle from the bow. His other hand reached for the gunwale, but a man struck at him with a paddle, and he turned back toward shore, swimming with one arm and holding the rifle above the water with the other.

The men were now in the stolen canoe and had cut their own loose. One picked up his rifle with the intention of shooting Jimmie Lad, but Tom, who had followed down the bank, began to heave rocks at him so rapidly and so accurately that he desisted, and all three picked up their paddles and shoved toward the point of rocks.

They reached it just as Jimmie Lad found footing. He took a snap shot and the man in the middle tumbled forward over a pack. The next instant the canoe disappeared around the bend.

CHAPTER V

DISASTER

"HERE!" cried Tom as Jimmie Lad stumbled ashore. "Give me that gun! I may head them yet!"

He waded out, grasped it from the winded, shivering Jimmie Lad and turned and ran up the bank.

The rocks rose to a point forty feet above the water at the sharp bend of the river, and toward the crest of these Tom made his way as rapidly as the slippery, rough nature of the going permitted.

When he reached the point, he was amazed to find the river empty. The canoe was not in sight, though there had not been time for it to go more than a hundred yards. The whole sweep of the river lay before him. Yet the canoe was gone.

As he stood there, it occurred to him that possibly the strangers had stopped and returned to the attack. One glance over his shoulder showed that this was not the case. While he was still bewildered, Jimmie Lad reached his side.

"Don't you see?" he cried after one glance. "They're right underneath us, Tom! They're trapped! They can't get away without our seeing them."

"You're right. I never thought of that."

"Of course. I got one of them, and they stopped around the bend to look after him. Now they know they're trapped and are hiding. But what do you make of this?"

"Right now all I know or care is that they left us stranded without a canoe," answered Tom. "Looks to me as if our only chance is to pick them off when they start to make a run for it."

In the excitement of the encounter with the strangers Jimmie Lad had not had time to visualize their plight. Tom's words brought a flash of every detail.

"Look here!" he demanded. "What happened to their canoe?"

They looked at the river below them. No sinking craft was in sight, and the current would have carried it into view.

"There's just a chance it sunk in shallow water!" exclaimed Tom excitedly. "Heavy stuff in it, and that rock you threw. Hurry up, lad, while I stay here to watch. And the girl! Where is she?"

At the question both men turned to the spot where they had stopped for lunch. The place was empty except for the dying fire and some food lying near it. The girl was gone.

"Oh Lord!" groaned Jimmie. "Worse and more of it!"

The men searched the landscape to the south and east, but nowhere could they see her. Back from the river, however, the land was undulating, a mass of low, boulder-

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crowned hills and shallow valleys. It was a network, a maze, and, by keeping cover, dodging from boulder to boulder, avoiding the slopes of the hills, any one who wished could easily have slipped away. Though there were no trees, not even a bush, a search was almost hopeless.

Jimmie Lad ran down the hill. His anxiety was evenly divided between the fate of the canoe and of the girl. In her mental state she might do anything, and yet without the canoe all faced certain death. It seemed more important to find the canoe first.

He turned to the river.

And there he saw the girl, perched on a boulder six feet out from the bank and reaching into the water with a pole. At the same moment she saw him and began to beckon frantically.

She was at the lower end of a narrow strip of beach that lay between the high rock and the water. She was hidden from Tom at the top and also from the half-breeds, who were somewhere around the bend. As Jimmie ran toward her, she continued to reach out into the river with her pole. Her signal to him, though excited and impatient, had been natural enough, but Jimmie Lad's only thought was that her mental condition was worse because of the attack.

"Hurry!" she called.

At the same moment she turned, crouched slightly and then leaped toward him, landing in a foot of water.

"Quick!" she said. "Get out on to the rock. The canoe has caught on a ledge just beyond."

"Canoe!" echoed Jimmie Lad. "Good for you!"

He had forgotten even to wonder at this sudden change that had come to her. He knew only that she was there and that there was still time to salvage the canoe. For she was right. The craft was almost entirely submerged but it had caught on a ledge eight or ten feet beyond the rock upon which she had stood.

Instantly he jumped to the first rock. The ledge was two feet under water. He leaped again and landed upon it with the water above his knees. The current tugged at his legs, and, as he reached down for the gunwale, he realized that the least touch might loosen the canoe and let it slip off into deep water.

"Can you shoot a rifle?" he suddenly demanded of the girl. "Shoot straight, I mean?"

"Yes," she answered simply.

He hesitated for a moment. He did not want to do it. The thought of Tom Gill perched up there on the rock, a rifle in his hands, was satisfying. Still, the canoe was more important.

"Then run up to the top of the rock," he said. "Send Tom down here to me, and you take his rifle and shoot the minute you see the men come out from under the rock."

She darted back along the beach almost before he had finished.

Jimmie Lad surveyed the situation before him. The canoe was almost entirely submerged, though, as he could feel, it rested only lightly on the ledge. The current was sweeping strongly against it, but a small projection of rock, against which the canoe happened to be nicely balanced, kept it from being swept down-stream.

Jimmie Lad saw that the half-breeds' equipment was still in the canoe, and because the craft was sunken he knew that most of it must be heavy. The rock he had thrown also was in the bottom. His first glance, too, had told him that the utmost care would be necessary in salvaging the craft and its contents. Nothing is more unwieldy or heavy than a canoe full of water in a current, and once this one were swept off the ledge it would be lost.

Fastened to the gunwale near his hand, Jimmie Lad saw a coil of rope used for tracking. He untied it carefully, lest any movement should upset the balance of the canoe, and as he lifted it from the water he heard Tom on the bank behind him.

"Figured out a way?" the woodsman asked quickly as he took in the situation at a glance.

"It's full of water and has enough heavy stuff in it to just about sink it," answered Jimmie Lad. "The current is strong here, but it won't be so bad beneath the ledge. Anything there to fasten this line to?"

"Pass me one end," answered Tom after a look behind him. "I can run it through this crack in the rocks and get a turn."

Jimmie Lad uncoiled the rope and tossed one end ashore.

"Now the trouble begins," he said when Tom had fastened it. "I can't reach the

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bow or stern, and it would never do to tie the rope to a center thwart. Here. Pass me that stick."

Tom tossed out the pole the girl had been using, and with it Jimmie Lad, after several attempts, managed to pass the rope under a forward thwart.

"Now take up the slack," he said. "Careful! You keep it, and I'll lift the canoe and shove toward shore. Ready?"

"Come on."

Jimmie Lad lifted and shoved, the canoe moved shoreward, and then the current caught it and whirled it off the ledge. Tom kept the rope tight, though he was almost snapped off his feet, and the heavy craft swung in toward the bank.

"Fine!" cried Jimmie Lad when he saw that it was safe. "Now I've got to get wet all over again."

He could not leap from his submerged perch, and there was nothing for him to do except swim. Four strokes carried him to the shore.

"What's in the canoe?" he asked with chattering teeth. "It's all the outfit we have if those fellows get away."

Tom was busy reaching into the water and bringing forth bags and boxes.

"Here's a rifle," he announced joyfully. "There must be shells for it, and we have only four left in ours."

THEY carried the canoe back to the rocks and then, when it was emptied of all except the water, lifted on one side and dragged it up.

"That's a bad hole you put in her," commented Tom as the water flowed out. "There's enough spruce-gum around here to patch it, though."

The next moment the canoe was bottom-up on the beach, and they had an opportunity to speak of the girl.

"She sure didn't waste any time when she started coming to!" exclaimed Tom. "It must have been those fellows that did it. She said they were her men and that they'd killed some one named Mark and tried to kill her. That's how we happened to find her alone. She was running away from them."

"The black devils!" muttered Jimmie Lad. "We've got to get them, Tom. It would be unadulterated joy to shoot any one who would leave a woman in this country. Could you hear them while you were on the rock?"

"Not a sound."

"How about the shore down-stream? Is there any place where one of us could see the point? If there is, now that we have two rifles, one can stay here and the other go down-stream and drive them back."

"Can't do it. The river keeps turning back to the west. The only place we could see them from is across the river."

"Then we can patch this canoe and get over there. Let's spread this stuff out to dry, carry the canoe back to where we stopped and get busy. If it clouds up tonight, it will get so dark about twelve o'clock they'll have a chance to sneak away."

"I guess that girl can stand guard up there for a while," said Tom as he picked up a pack. "She seems to know exactly what's to be done and how to do it, all right."

"She's the one who got the canoe," added Jimmie Lad. "I found her down here trying to reach it with a pole. She must have seen it floating off when we were trying to head them from the top of the rock."

They carried everything to the open space where Tom had built the lunch-fire and began to unfasten the packs.

"This is no Indian or half-breed outfit," commented Jimmie Lad. "There's a lot of stuff here that comes from the States or lower Canada. Here's an aluminum cooking-outfit and dishes. And here's about fifty shells for this rifle."

"Why, it's her outfit, of course!" exclaimed Tom. "They must have been her guides. How's she getting along?"

They looked at the top of the rock and saw the girl walking back and forth, the rifle in the crook of her left arm. She glanced down, saw them, waved a greeting and continued her patrol.

"She'll do," said Tom admiringly. "Good as a man."

"And it leaves us free to work on the canoe," added Jimmie Lad. "This stuff will dry now. Let's get at the mending. We've got to smoke those fellows out before dark."

They went down-stream along the narrow beach between the water and the high rock, and each picked up an end of the canoe. Before they had lifted it to their shoulders, they heard a shot from the rocks above them.

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"Let her down quick!" cried Tom. "They're making a run for it!"

Jimmie Lad, not taking chances, had brought the rifle rescued from the sunken canoe, and with it he ran back to the base of the rock and then upward. There had been a second shot, and, as he neared the top, he saw the girl standing at the edge and aiming down-stream. Again she fired, and as Jimmie Lad reached her side, his weapon ready, he saw the canoe disappear behind an island three hundred yards down-stream.

"Oh!" cried the girl. "They're getting away! It's my fault. And I wanted to shoot them, to kill them as they killed Mark."

Her dejection was so great that Jimmie Lad could not have voiced his own disappointment. Nor could he have told her then how great a disaster was the loss of the fleeing canoe.

"Did you hit them at all?" he questioned.

"Only the canoe. Twice. The other bullet struck the water."

"Why, that's shooting some! How many were there?"

"Only two. You must have killed the third one."

Tears came to her eyes, tears of vexation.

"Never mind," he comforted. "You did as well as either of us could have done."

"But I was so sure. They went down-stream, keeping close to the shore and out of sight under these rocks until they got to that big boulder down there. From that they had only a hundred yards of open water to reach the little island, and they paddled for all they were worth. Look! There they go!"

The canoe had darted out from under cover of the island.

Jimmie Lad took his own rifle from her hands and, resting it on a boulder, took careful aim at one of the men. They were now three hundred and fifty yards away.

"This is the last shell," he whispered, and he pulled the trigger.

"You hit the canoe!" she cried. "But missed them. No! One's down! He isn't! He's just bailing. It must be leaking badly from the bullet-holes. Now we can never catch them."

"It isn't necessary at all!" declared Jimmie Lad. "We're going to get through all right. You saved us from being stranded by finding that canoe before it slipped off the ledge. And in it we found a lot of stuff. Just swapped equipment."

He stopped suddenly, for Tom had come up, and he did not wish to have her know then that in the canoe they had lost had been the greater part of the ammunition with which the entire party was planning to shoot its way through the Barren Grounds.

CHAPTER VI

A NEW SEARCH

"IN THE first place," said Jimmie Lad, after Tom had been told what had happened and they had watched the fleeing canoe disappear around a bend in the river, "I'll tell you who we are and what we've done with you. This is Tom Gill. My name is James Wells. My father, Marshall Wells, and Jimmie Dunn and Tom and I started last Winter to find an oasis in the Barren Grounds of which Uncle Jimmie heard when he was here twenty-two years ago, the time he was held prisoner by a band of renegade Indians for two years. What's the matter? You—you are not going to forget again?"

The girl had started at his last words, and there had been a flash of terror in her eyes.

"No," she said calmly. "Go on. I have heard of your father and Mr. Dunn and Mr. Gill. I have read every word they have written of their journeys. Later I will tell you what frightened me."

"Well, we four started last Winter and when the ice went out were north of Lake Athabasca. Father and Uncle Jimmie went north on the Dubawnt to look that way, and Tom and I cut in east up a small stream and then started north, expecting to find the headwaters of the Thelon, which we were to explore. We were to meet at the place where the Hanbury flows into the lower Thelon, or this side of it.

"Four days ago we found you more than a hundred miles south of here. You couldn't speak or tell us anything about yourself, and we brought you along because we couldn't find anything that would give us a hint as to whether you were alone or with some one else."

"I'll explain all that," interrupted the girl. "My name is Helen Corwin, and my home is in Ottawa. I have a brother——"

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"Is his name Mark?" broke in Jimmie Lad eagerly. "Is that his picture in your coat."

"No," she answered, and then she was mystified by the expression of disappointment in the young man's face.

"Then you're married," he blurted out.

"Married!" she cried in amazement. "Why should you think that?"

"We figured it out that way; thought your husband had been drowned in the rapids and you had his picture in your pocket," Jimmie Lad explained in evident confusion.

"That's Jerry's picture," she laughed. "I brought it to show Indians or Eskimos. If they had seen Jerry, they would know his picture. He's my brother, and no one was drowned. Mark, Mark Avery, was my guide—and friend, too."

She hesitated. The tears came to her eyes.

"But where is your brother?" asked Tom in bewilderment.

"I don't know. That's what I came to find out."

"Don't you even know where Mark is?" exclaimed Jimmie Lad.

"He is dead," she said. "He was an old woodsman who had spent his life in the country north of Ottawa. He taught me most of the things I know about the bush, and taught Jerry, too. Those—those men in that canoe killed him."

Again the tears came to her eyes, but she brushed them away and went on.

"Some of the things which have happened since you found me have come back to me, but I'll begin at the beginning and tell it all. Then you'll understand. Jerry, my brother, and I have spent a great deal of time in the bush north of Ottawa ever since we were children. I have been with him on long trips, once to Moose Factory on James Bay, and always Mark went with us. I have hunted moose and caribou, paddled and poled a canoe, camped out in Winter and Summer. Father started us and always went with us until he died.

"Jerry had always wanted to make a trip into the Far North. He read all he could find of what Franklin and Richardson and Back did and all the other explorers in those days. I wanted to go with him, but he always said it was too much for a woman. Then one day a friend of father's told Jerry about his scheme for a railroad through the country east of Great Slave Lake. He had an idea that the western coast of Hudson Bay would be a wonderful Summer resort country and that rich Americans would flock to the place if there were a way of reaching it.

"It sounds fantastical, I know, but he really did interest some Canadian businessmen, and a company was organized. One of the first things to do was to make a rough survey and to learn of conditions. This work was offered to Jerry, and he accepted. He started a year ago last Winter, reaching Fort Resolution by dog-team. Then he went east when the ice went out in the Spring.

"I knew his plans perfectly. We went over them so often together. He was to go to Artillery Lake, then Clinton-Golden Lake, across to Abbott Lake and down the river that flows from there to the Dubawnt waterway. He was to go as far as Baker Lake, which was already known and is such a short distance from Chesterfield Inlet, and then turn back. He planned every detail, made careful calculations, and he expected to make the return journey as far as Fort Chippewyan on Lake Athabasca, at least, before the ice stopped him. With fair luck he would be in Edmonton by the first of the Winter, and in any event he would reach Ottawa by Christmas. He was sure of that. He promised to be back.

"Christmas came, and there was no word of him. The last of January I went to the man who had sent him. He laughed. Said a month or two should always be allowed for so long a journey in such a country. The middle of February he still said there was nothing to cause worry. I insisted that he send out a relief expedition and he refused. Said that, if Jerry were not back by the next Fall, he would do something. I felt certain, from what Jerry had planned and his promise, that something had happened to him. I wanted to go and look for him, and finally, the last of February, I went to see Mark. He agreed to go with me, and we started.

"I had heard so much about the unreliability of the Northern Indians that Mark and I picked up three French half-breeds from eastern Canada. We knew they could pack and handle a canoe in any water, and we thought it better than to trust to Indians we would find at the Hudson's Bay Company posts. We went to Edmonton and then by dog-team to Fort Resolution."

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"Resolution!" exclaimed Tom. "You did!"

"Of course," she answered. "And from there we went to the east end of Great Slave Lake on the ice, hauling two canoes we bought from the Hudson's Bay Company at Resolution. There had been no word of Jerry there, and the post-manager said that he believed he had gone out by way of Chesterfield Inlet and Fort Churchill or south to Lake Athabasca. We knew he hadn't gone out by way of Athabasca, for we had passed through Fort Chippewyan, and we knew he hadn't gone to Churchill, for he would have been out before we left.

"We reached Abbott Lake on the ice, and there we found Jerry's first cairn. That was really the start of his journey. With the first open water we started down the Hanbury River."

"Good Lord!" Tom interrupted again. "You got that far before break-up!"

"It wasn't difficult. We had Indians and dogs from Resolution to help us through, and there were four men in our party. From Clinton-Golden Lake we were alone. Our troubles began when we reached the mouth of the Hanbury. Just before that we found a cairn Jerry had built. His message said he was going up the Thelon a ways. But at the mouth of the Hanbury there was nothing to show that he had ever come back. Of course, we turned up the Thelon. We traveled several days, but there were no more cairns, no indications that Jerry had been that way.

"Our men worked splendidly as far as the Hanbury. They had not complained, and there seemed to be no discontent. When they knew they were on the Thelon, however, they began to grumble. You know the present-day voyageurs. They are superstitious, easily led, and they always believe the last thing they hear. Our Indians from Fort Resolution had told them much about the Thelon, what a terrible river it was and how no Indians dared go there because of the Eskimos who lived along its bank in Summer.

"We did not know the men were hearing this or that they feared the river. Then they came out flat-footed and said they would go no farther, that it was dangerous, that the Eskimos would kill all of us, that we would never be able to get back before Winter and that, if we escaped the Eskimos, we would starve. Mark and I were worried because we were not finding any traces of Jerry. Mark was in no mood to stand for any nonsense, and he told the men to keep quiet and go to work. A quarrel started. Mark lost his temper; there was a fight, and Mark was killed."

Tears came to her eyes, and she turned away. Tom and Jimmie Lad, who had been moved to unbounded admiration by the mere thought of the journey the girl had made, stood in awkward silence.

"That sobered the men," she continued at last. "They were frightened. When I told them they must go on, that I must find Jerry, they obeyed. For two days they were cowed. Then they began to realize what would happen when they got outside. They understood of a sudden that they couldn't take me out.

"I had expected something of the sort, and I listened at their tent the second night. I heard them make their plans. One was for killing me in cold blood. Another thought it better to desert me, taking all the equipment. None offered any plan that gave me a chance. I was the only person who could convict them, and I had to be done away with. I was not surprized, for that was the logical sequel to the murder of Mark. They had nearly all the food in their tent. I had my rifle, bedding, ammunition and a little food. I took it in the night, put it in the canoe and went up-stream."

"Up-stream!" interrupted Jimmie Lad.

"Yes, up. At Fort Chippewyan I saw an old Indian who said he had been on the Thelon as a boy, that its headwaters were not far from Lake Athabasca and that there was a route across there. I knew that the half-breeds would expect me to go down-stream, not only because the current was that way but because it was the only route I knew. I expected they would go that way to overtake me.

"I KNEW what I faced. The chances were one to a million that I would ever get out. But I could try, and in going south there was still the chance that I would find some trace of Jerry. I went up-stream for a week. It was hard work, for the current was stiff, and it was all I could do to manage the canoe on a portage."

"You don't mean that you carried that canoe!" exclaimed Jimmie Lad.

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"I had to. There was nothing else to do. I had carried small canoes, birch-barks and canvas canoes, but never one so heavy. But after a while, when my food ran low and I couldn't get game, I became so weak I couldn't lift it to my shoulders. Then I tracked it up the rapids. The river was smaller; there were many lakes, and I knew I was getting near the source.

"But I was awfully weak. I was in such a hurry to go on I didn't stop to hunt. Before then I had seen caribou. When I needed them, there were none. I think I was delirious when I was working up some rapids one day. The rope broke; the canoe was upset and carried away with all my equipment. I don't remember much after that. I only knew I must go south, that on Lake Athabasca I would find Indians, and I went in that direction. That's all I know."

For a moment the two men were silent. In silence only could they express the admiration which her story compelled. She had encountered and conquered dangers and obstacles which might well daunt a strong man. And now she told of it as casually, as quietly, as if she were relating incidents of an uneventful journey through a Summer holiday land.

They knew it was not due to ignorance of its perils. She was of the North country, and she knew its moods. Rather there had been a quietness of narrative born of self-reliance and courage, and with their eyes both men paid the tribute she deserved.

The most surprizing thing about it all was that there was nothing about her to indicate that she was capable of accomplishing what she had. Though she had spent the greater part of the Winter in the Far North, had traveled much more than a thousand miles; though she had, alone, paddled a canoe up a river never before traveled by a white man, she still had the appearance, except for her heavy tan, of a girl of the cities.

There was something so distinctly feminine, so soft and girlish, about her that Jimmie Lad could only stare open-mouthed. And, as he stared, it suddenly dawned upon him what this girl had come to mean to him in the short time since he had found her beneath the rock that night of the storm.

At first, as she lay unconscious, he had thought of her only as a little girl who needed his protection. Her appeal had been in her dependency upon him. She was something small and soft and alive which must be fed and warmed and shielded from the rigors of the Northland. The feeling had only deepened when she had recovered consciousness and he had realized what her mental condition was. He had suffered as he had never before suffered for another that evening when she had tried to break through the daze which enshrouded her. But in all his sympathetic anxiety he had never realized that buried beneath the shadow was a will, an ability and a determination which were truly magnificent.

In her actions following the surprize attack, he had, despite the rapid sequence of events, found himself marveling at her discovery and attempt to salvage the sunken canoe, her standing guard upon the rock and her plucky endeavor to shoot the fleeing murderers. He had never known that girls could be so competent in the great out-of doors, that they could meet its problems without flinching.

But now, as he looked at her, realizing all that she had done, all that she had endured, and yet seeing the soft, enticing womanliness of her, a new sensation seized him. It was one he had never known before, and in its grip he was without power to move or to speak. It remained for the practical Tom to ask the question he wished to ask:

"What brought you to, miss? Seeing those fellows again?"

"Yes, that was it. All the time, from the moment I first wakened in your tent, I have tried to remember I knew something terrible had happened. It was like a nightmare, and it is hard to describe it. It seemed that I could almost remember but not quite. Have you ever tried to say a word or a name that seemed to be just on the edge of your consciousness and you felt that, if you just kept still and thought, it would come to you?"

Both men nodded understandingly.

"That is the way it was with me. I knew that there was something that I must remember, that I must tell you. I felt that something very important depended upon it. And I knew that it was very terrible. I used to try all day, but that was as far as I could get."

"And all the time you were going through that," interrupted Jimmie Lad, "we were plaguing you with our silly questions. Why didn't you stop us? Why didn't you speak?"

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"I was afraid to speak," confessed the girl. "I had a feeling that my only safety lay in silence. I was afraid to talk, to tell you that I could not remember. It seemed that, if I ever said it aloud, it committed me. I can't make you understand. It is all sort of dim to me, as if I were trying to fight my way out of a cloud. Being smothered must be very much like what I suffered. I seemed to realize that I could not remember and that I must remember soon if I were to save some one or do something that I wanted to do very much.

"At the same time I seemed to know that mental trouble like that can be serious. I knew it must be that way with me, and I felt that, if I sat all day and just thought and thought, after a while it would come to me. I don't know that my silence helped any," and she gave the men a ragged little smile. "You probably thought that I was worse than I really was. And then I saw the men, and it all came back to me. At least, they have done that much, for we might have gone out of the country, away from Jerry, and that, I think, I could not have borne."

She stopped, and both men remained silent for a moment. Tom could not have expressed his admiration of her plucky fight in shadow land, and Jimmie Lad had an almost uncontrollable desire to take her in his arms. Not to comfort her. She was above that. But to tell her she was the most wonderful woman in the world.

Tom Gill, as usual, found a safety-valve for the situation in its practicable aspects.

"But your brother?" he asked. "Did you find any other trace of him?"

"Yes, I found a cairn three days after leaving the men. He built it at the spot where he turned back on the upper Thelon. He said he would go straight through to Baker Lake, that he was well and that he expected to have no trouble."

"But he would have left a note at the mouth of the Hanbury," objected Tom.

"I know, and I think he did."

"Didn't you find it?"

"No. When Mark and I reached the mouth of the Hanbury, we searched both shores for a cairn. There was none. We did find a place where Mark said a cairn had been built. But the rocks had been scattered, and there was no sign of a note. I know now that Jerry built one there and that it was torn down by some one. Before he left Ottawa, he marked on a map all the places where he would surely leave a record of his trip, and he marked one at the mouth of the Hanbury."

"But who would tear it down?" asked Jimmie Lad.

"You never know what is going to happen in a country where no one lives and no one ever travels," answered Tom. "I showed you one yesterday that George Mitchell's Indians tore down on Jimmie Dunn."

"But there are no Indians on the Hanbury or on the Thelon," objected Helen.

"And Marsh Wells and I never expected to find any when we came through looking for Jimmie Dunn twenty-two years ago. But we did."

"You think, then," and Helen Corwin stepped forward and grasped Tom's arm tightly, "that Indians have—have harmed Jerry?"

"It's hard to tell what happened to him in such a country," he answered. "But, if his cairn was torn down like you say, there was somebody to do it. And, if somebody did it, they had a reason."

"Then I'm too late," and the tears came to the girl's eyes.

"Not at all," answered Tom gruffly. "Jimmie Dunn was gone for two years. And we found him."

"Of course," added Jimmie Lad with all the cheerfulness he could muster. "We're headed down-stream, and we'll keep on going to Chesterfield Inlet if necessary. We were only hunting for an oasis that may never have existed, and it can wait a year or two."

"Will you?" cried the girl, and she grasped a hand of each. "Will you take me? I know Jerry is alive up there somewhere. He must be, and he's waiting for the help he knows I will send."

CHAPTER VII

TAKING STOCK

"AND that means we have our work cut out for us," said Tom, who sought to relieve the emotional crisis the girl was approaching. "We've got to fix that canoe, and we need a lunch. You keep this rifle and stay here, miss, while the lad and I rustle something to eat. Then I'll come up here and watch while you eat, and then you come back while we get to work on the canoe."

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"Watch!" Helen exclaimed.

"Sure, we've got a lot to do from now on. What you told us makes it the more certain that we must be careful. Those guides of yours have one murder and two more attempts checked up against them now, and they won't want any of us to get out. They're desperate men, those half-breeds, and the thing most like them is to sneak back here and get us from across the river."

"It's a good idea," admitted Jimmie Lad. "You can watch both sides of the river from here. Just sing out if you see anything moving."

The men hurried up the slope to the camp-site. While Tom rebuilt the fire, Jimmie Lad carried the canoe up from the river bank.

"We're in for a fine little time, lad," said the old woodsman. "And I couldn't bear to tell the girl, right then, how things stood."

"You mean," demanded Jimmie Lad indignantly, "that we won't look for her brother? That we will go back on our word to her?"

"Stop that! Not even you, lad, can say that to Tom Gill. But I didn't want her to know all that cussed bunch of half-breed peasoups did to us. She's been through too much. I wish they would come back and give us one more chance at that canoe of ours. Only their way of doing it will be to hide behind a rock and take a pot-shot at us as we go by."

"You're thinking about that ammunition," agreed Jimmie Lad soberly. "It's pretty near all I've thought about since I saw the canoe disappear. How much do you think we can count on father and Uncle Jimmie having when we see them?"

"Not more than two hundred shells. They took about three hundred and fifty when we separated. We had twelve hundred in our canoe, more than two-thirds of all we brought. Shooting our way through the country means shells. It means that, if we go on that, we will have just about one-seventh of what we thought was necessary when we started."

"And the trade-goods we had for the Eskimos, too," added Jimmie. "When I saw you take the reserve supply of ammunition to make a light load for them, I thought it was such a good idea that I picked up the pack with all those axes and files and knives. They're gone, too. And that means that we can't get much help from the Huskies."

"And we can't Winter in the Barren Grounds, or near them, without a lot of ammunition," Tom continued. "With the shells your dad and Jimmie Dunn will have, we could get out before Winter, either to Fort Resolution or to Fort Churchill. But we couldn't lose any time."

"You mean—" said Jimmie.

"I don't mean anything," Tom replied almost irritably. "I mean that is what we're up against, and anything we decide to do ought to be decided by the whole lot of us."

"But father and Uncle Jimmie—" began Jimmie Lad.

"I guess I know your father and Jimmie Dunn as well as you do," interrupted Tom shortly. "And what we've promised we'll do. But let's let the others decide for themselves when they know and not count on their ammunition until we know what they plan."

Tom arose quickly and started up the slope to relieve Miss Corwin. Jimmie Lad had a seat arranged and her meal served when she arrived.

"You mustn't do such things for me," she protested. "I'm able to take care of myself, and you two have enough to do without waiting on me."

"But you're our guest," he answered. "Besides, it seems so good to hear you talk."

"You haven't told me about what happened since you found me. Was it far from here?"

Jimmie Lad told of their being awakened in the night, of the song they had heard and how, the second night "they," as he told it, had gone out and found her. Briefly he described their journey down the Thelon and then asked—

"But why did you keep on up-stream after you found your brother's last cairn?"

"It was the only thing to do," she answered. "I knew the men would think that I had gone down-stream, and I knew I could not be of any help to Jerry by going down the Thelon alone. I was going to try to get through to Lake Athabasca and Fort Chippewyan and get some more men."

Jimmie Lad did not comment. It was a journey he would have hesitated to begin. But his eyes did show his admiration.

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"It was the only thing to do," she declared as if he had accused her. "I wasn't going to sit down and starve."

"Yes, of course. But how do you suppose those men happened to be here today? They wouldn't wait around."

"They must have gone down-stream first after I slipped away in the night," she answered. "They probably traveled fast for two or three days and then, when they did not overtake me, knew I was behind them. They were coming back when we met them today, for they wouldn't let me have a chance to get away. Besides, I took the only maps, and they wouldn't want to get to Fort Resolution without Mark or me. It would cause questions."

Jimmie Lad excused himself and began to collect spruce-gum from the stunted trees along the river bank. As soon as Helen finished eating, she returned to the top of the rock, and Tom came down to examine the canoe.

"You smashed four planks in the bottom, broke three ribs and tore a hole in the canvas," he announced when Jimmie Lad came with the spruce-gum. "But I can fix it."

He split and hewed thin strips of spruce, found bent pieces that could be hewed into ribs, cut a strip of canvas from the floor-cloth of the half-breed's tent and in three hours pronounced his work complete.

"She won't leak, but she's going to be mighty tender," he remarked. "With the right kind of care she'll pull through."

"What now?" asked Jimmie Lad. "It's five o'clock. Shall we camp here or go on?"

"You mean those half-breeds, eh? Well, we've got to get past them some time, and we might as well do it now. Besides, it can't be far to the place where your father and Jimmie Dunn will strike this river."

The half-breeds' outfit had dried, and they put it in the packs. When they were ready, they went to the top of the rock and joined Helen.

"I haven't seen a moving thing except some caribou," she said as they came up.

"It don't matter now," Tom told her. "We're going on down-river."

She glanced at him quickly but did not speak of what the journey might mean.

TOM kept the canoe in the middle of the stream and announced that he would watch the right bank. Jimmie Lad and Helen took the other, and, as they were swept down the swift current, they did not speak. The miles and the hours slipped by, but not once did they see anything that indicated that the half-breeds had passed.

"Maybe they've gone on and won't bother about us now," said Jimmie Lad. "Anyhow, they don't know that we have this canoe."

"They might suspect it, and they'd like nothing better than to have us think they had skipped on ahead," answered Tom. "I'm not saying they haven't, but we don't know, and we've got to keep on as if they had. Do you remember this part of the river, Miss Helen?"

"There is a long, narrow lake between here and the mouth of the Hanbury," she answered.

"How about rapids from here on?"

"There's nothing you can't run."

"In the dark?"

"As I remember it, the river is fairly safe between here and the lake."

The sun set, and they kept on. They were now much farther north than when they had first heard the girl singing in the night, and there was only a brief period of total darkness. Even then Tom did not turn ashore but kept on down the center of the stream.

The dawn came with a suddenness that startled Jimmie Lad, who had always slept through that part of the night, and with it came the long lake of which Helen had told them.

"Now we can get some sleep," said Tom as he turned down the eastern shore. "We'll go down to that big hill and camp on the top. From that we two can watch turn and turn about while Miss Helen sleeps."

"Please call me Helen," said the girl. "Both of you. We three are together, and it's the bush and—you're my friends."

"That's a go," said Tom. "Mister and miss don't ever sound right in the bush, do they?"

Jimmie Lad offered to take the first watch. After they had made camp, he sat on the crest of the ridge which ran out to the shore, and from where he could see up and down almost the entire length of

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the lake. Behind him the land sloped smoothly away from either side. It was impossible for any one to approach without being seen.

But Jimmie Lad was very sleepy and very tired. He was forced at last to walk up and down a narrow beat to keep awake and at the end of two hours was glad to call Tom. The woodsman stood guard for three hours.

"Let me watch," came a voice behind him, and he turned quickly to find Helen.

"I slept in the canoe, and I didn't paddle; so I wasn't tired," she explained. "Really, I'll keep awake."

"I wasn't thinking you wouldn't," Tom hastened to say, for he had only stared at her. "But I'll tell you what I was thinking, and that is I've seen lots worse men in the bush than you."

The girl blushed and smiled, and Tom went to the tent.

For two hours Helen maintained the watch. It was a bright, sunny morning, and the view from her seat was wonderful. Below her the lake was rippled by a slight breeze. Behind her the Barren Lands spread, rolling as far as she could see, a vast prairie.

The beauty of the scene did not bring forgetfulness, however. Regularly she scanned the lake. With a mathematical thoroughness she blocked out the land behind her and searched each acre of it. It was in the midst of one of those methodical surveys of the Barren Grounds that something caused her to turn and look southward on the lake. Instantly she was on her feet, straining her eyes. After a moment she ran to the tent.

"Get up," she called in a low voice. "A canoe is coming."

Both men scrambled out and looked in the direction Helen was pointing.

"We got by them in the night!" exclaimed Jimmie Lad.

Tom, after one glance, whirled and began to tear down the tent.

"Pick up the stuff and get it back out of sight!" he commanded. "There's a chance they didn't see it."

Both Jimmie Lad and Helen jumped to help him, and in five minutes tent and outfit were below the crest of the ridge on the north side.

"Now," said Tom, "I'll go get the canoe and hide it behind a rock or somewhere. You pack this stuff into that hollow, lad, and don't either of you stand up on the rise here. You can lay down here, Helen, and keep watch on them."

In fifteen minutes Tom returned to report that only a bird, "and one flying high," could ever see the canoe, and he looked approvingly at the results of Jimmie Lad's efforts.

"Now," he said, "I'm going to take the rifle and go down to the shore. I found a place to hide. Those fellows are coming right along; so they haven't seen us. The wind's slanting off this shore; so they'll keep close and turn the point. That's going to bring them close in, and then we've got 'em."

He ran down the side of the ridge, and Helen and Jimmie Lad crept up behind a boulder and lay down in a position where they could watch the approaching canoe.

"Tom's right," said Jimmie Lad. "They haven't seen us. They're going to walk right into the trap."

So great was their excitement they did not take their eyes off the craft. It had been five miles away when Helen had first seen it, and they would still have to wait half an hour before the canoe would round the point.

It came nearer, unhesitatingly, straight down the shore. Not once did the rapidly flashing paddles cease. Jimmie Lad found himself grinning, muttering, striking the ground with clenched fist. Helen was more quiet, more intent, and not once did she look away.

Then, when only a third of a mile away, the canoe suddenly stopped. The two paddlers looked up at the ridge. The man in the bow turned to speak to the one in the stern.

"That's funny," said Jimmie Lad as he crouched down. "Do you suppose they saw us?"

"No," whispered Helen excitedly. "Don't you see? It's some one else. It's not the men who were with me."

Jimmie Lad stared for a moment. Then he leaped to his feet and began to wave frantically.

"It's dad and Uncle Jimmie!" he cried. "They've come in behind us."

He started down the hill to the lake shore, leaving Helen standing on the crest of the ridge, outlined against the sky. The men

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in the canoe began to paddle, and in a moment Jimmie Lad had grasped the bow of their canoe.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FIRST CLUE

QUESTIONS, unheeded and unanswered, rattled back and forth as Marshall Wells and Jimmie Dunn stepped ashore and shook hands with Jimmie Lad and with Tom Gill, who had recognized the newcomers almost as soon as the two on the ridge.

"How did you get in behind us?" "Who's that on the hill?" "That's not a girl in the Barren Grounds?" "Didn't you see the cairns we built?" "How much ammunition have you?" "Did you two kill that half-breed we found floating in the river?" "Did you come up the Chamberlain?"

"Wait! Wait!" cried Jimmie Dunn, holding up both hands. "Keep quiet a minute. I'll tell you ours first—and quick.

"Marsh and I got to Dubawnt Lake without trouble, but the ice was so bad we saw it would be two or three weeks before we could get through. So we turned back to that little lake where I built a cairn the last time I was there—the one you and Marsh found, Tom—and we came through to the Thelon that way. We didn't find any signs of your being ahead of us except a dead man floating in the river. We knew you'd expect to meet us farther down; so we came along intending to wait for you."

"Didn't you see any of our cairns?" asked Jimmie Lad.

"Of course not," said Tom. "They struck the Thelon at that blazed tree I showed you, and we didn't build any yesterday."

"No, we didn't see any cairns," said Marshall. "But hurry your story. Did you kill that half-breed?"

"Yes," said Jimmie Lad, and he began his story with a brief account of their two weeks' toil and uncertainty in reaching the headwaters of the Thelon. But he quickly arrived at the point where they had been first awakened by the screams and the inexplicable song. His story was long from there on, for there were details that were necessary, and before he had finished both his father and Jimmie Dunn had grasped the significance of the loss of the canoe and its cargo. Before that their interest in the story of Helen Corwin had to take second place.

"How many cartridges have we, Marsh?" asked Jimmie Dunn.

"Less than two hundred and fifty. How many did you find in their canoe, Jimmie Lad?"

"Fifty-five, and they don't fit our rifles; only the one they left."

"And we haven't enough trade goods to get anything at all from the Eskimos," said Jimmie Dunn.

"And it would take fifty caribou alone to make clothes for the five of us, let alone a couple of skin-tents, moccasins, snow-shoes and the rest," said Tom. "We wouldn't last till Christmas with what ammunition we have."

Marshall Wells and Jimmie Dunn nodded, and each glanced up the hill, on the crest of which Helen Corwin was still sitting. She had known that the men would want to discuss their plans, that her presence had completely upset their original project and that they would feel more free in talking over the situation if she were not present.

"It seems to me," said Jimmie Dunn, "that there is only one safe thing to do, and that is to get to Fort Resolution before ice comes."

"If we stay and are caught here by Winter, we are simply going to starve," added Marshall Wells. "We must depend entirely upon fish and game for our food, which is uncertain enough in itself should we have plenty of ammunition."

"Even the Eskimos will be gone from the lower Thelon by Fall, and that means there won't be any one within three hundred miles of us," said Tom Gill.

Jimmie Lad did not speak. His brows were slightly puckered in a frown of mystification, but there was a glitter in his eyes. He looked at his father, at his foster-uncle, at Tom Gill and then back again. Always he watched their faces searchingly, apparently seeking an answer there, rather than in their words.

"We haven't the least idea where her brother is," said Marshall Wells. "And the chances are ten to one that he is dead."

"If some one took the pains to tear down his cairn at the mouth of the Hanbury, it was done to cover up his tracks after putting him out of the way," added Jimmie Dunn. "Eskimos may get up that far,

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and, while they're generally the most peaceable people in the world, the wrong sort of treatment will stir them up."

"That's a lot of territory to search through, between here and the head of Chesterfield Inlet," continued Marshall. "To do it right would require a lot of time."

"And our shells would be gone by the time we got there," said Tom.

"We could hunt for those half-breeds with the chance of getting our ammunition back," interrupted Jimmie Dunn with less pessimism than before.

"And spend the Summer doing it," said Marshall. "What's the matter, lad?"

The three older men turned to the younger one. His eyes were snapping angrily; his lips were tightly compressed, and they saw that he was restraining himself with difficulty.

"I just want to know," he finally burst forth, and speaking to his father, "if you and Tom Gill thought of all those things when you were hunting for Uncle Jimmie? Oh, I know what you're going to say!" as his father started to speak. "You'll say that Uncle Jimmie was your partner, your best friend, and that none of us ever saw Jerry Corwin. But he's just as human as Uncle Jimmie, and he's up here needing help, and we're four white men, the only other ones in the country, the only ones who can help him."

"Now, don't go any farther," commanded Marshall sternly. "Tom and I did think of all those things when we were hunting for Jimmie Dunn. No one except a fool starts upon such an expedition without weighing the consequences, without considering all the alternatives. That's what we are doing now. We're looking at the worst of it first. We want to know exactly what we face. We want to choose the best course. And let me tell you right here that the three of us include in that course our best efforts in finding this man."

"Certainly," added Jimmie Dunn. "There have been times when Marsh and Tom and I would have given a good deal to know that some one was taking a chance for us when we needed help."

"And after seeing that little girl and knowing what she's done," declared Tom, "I'd go hunting caribou with a bow and arrow before I'd take her out without making some sort of a try for her brother."

"But we're not going into it with our eyes shut, taking any sort of a chance," said Jimmie Dunn. "We're going to thresh the whole thing out, decide what is best to do and then do it. And I guess we'll get out somehow. Come on up the hill. I want to see the girl who would do what you say this one has done."

They climbed the ridge, and Jimmie Lad introduced his father and Jimmie Dunn.

"I spent twelve years up here in the Barren Grounds," said Marshall as he took the hand she extended, "and I want to say that I've seen several men, big and husky, who wouldn't dare attempt what you have done."

"But I had to do it!" she exclaimed. "There wasn't anything else to do."

"That's the way of the Barren Grounds. Alternatives don't grow in this climate. Even the rocks of this country are not more unyielding than its exactions."

She did not readily grasp what he meant, feared he referred to the search for her brother, and she glanced quickly, fearfully, at the faces of the three older men.

"Do you mean—" she faltered at last.

"I meant that life up here beyond the trees is so uncertain there is usually only one course open," explained Marshall gently. "You shoot, or you starve. You toil, or you perish. You fight to the last breath, or you are beaten down. Those are the very conditions that bring men here; that make them want to come. Only men do come, and, when one falls because the land is too severe, it is the duty of other men to help him. And the four of us, Miss Corwin, are going to do everything we can to get trace of your brother. In such cases, too, there are no alternatives."

Tears came to her eyes, but she smiled.

"Oh!" she cried. "You're splendid—all of you!"

"Just human," answered Marshall. "And human enough to want to eat. Let's get busy with the kettles and then decide what we will do."

"The first thing is to get some meat or fish," said Tom when the entire food supply had been laid out. "There's just about enough for a meal here. You fellows didn't bring much."

"Marsh and I will go out as soon as we eat," said Jimmie Dunn. "You two can go over what equipment we have and see how we stand."

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THERE had been no reference, since the reunion of the two halves of the party, to the original object of their expedition into the Barren Grounds. But even the story of Helen Corwin could not drive it entirely from the minds of two men who had planned for more than twenty years on finding the fabled oasis of timber on that great treeless waste. When Marshall and Jimmie Dunn had left camp, the latter brought it up.

"If that bunch of trees is on the Chamberlain, we'll miss it," he said. "Though we may get through there yet. It can't be more than fifty miles across here."

"It wouldn't do any harm to keep looking while we're searching for traces of Corwin," Marshall answered. "But it would be tough luck if he had found it first. We've talked of that discovery so long, and neither one had ever thought that some one might happen upon it before we came."

"The more I think of it, the more I think we'll have to find the oasis to find him," said Jimmie Dunn. "What if he had stumbled into it and has been held prisoner by the band of Indians that lives in it?"

"That experience of yours has given you too vivid an imagination for the Barren Grounds," laughed Marshall. "It could happen only once. George Mitchell and his gang were an exceptional case, and Mitchell is dead. He had a white man's brain, or it never would have happened. If young Corwin found this oasis, and Indians are living in it, they wouldn't harm him.

"As I look at it, there are two things only that may have happened. First, he may have been drowned or killed accidentally. Secondly, he may have been hurt, broken a leg or something like that, or lost his equipment and have been taken care of by these Indians in the oasis.

"There is a third possibility, too. If there is an oasis, or if there is one but it is not inhabited by Indians, it may be that he went north with the Eskimos last Fall and would come back this Summer. They come every year to the lower Thelon for wood to build sledges and then go back to the Arctic coast in the Fall.

"If he lost his equipment or was caught down the Thelon too late in the year, the wisest thing he could have done would have been to go with the Huskies. As the existence of the oasis and its Indians is entirely problematical, the more I am inclined to believe he is with the Eskimos. Provided always that he is alive."

"Then you think the best course for us is to go on down-stream, watch for cairns or any other sign of him, and get in touch with the Eskimos? The idea Miss Corwin had of bringing his picture is a good one."

It was the first direct reference to the girl, and it brought quick silence to Jimmie Dunn, who had spoken of her, and to Marshall also. They walked on for some time without speaking. Then Jimmie Dunn laughed.

"What's the matter?" demanded Marshall somewhat roughly.

"I was thinking of you and me, Marsh, and of the fallibility of humans in general. You and I, and Tom, too, have been feeling mighty proud of ourselves with the work of the last fifteen years or so. We haven't thought of anything except that boy and of how we were going to bring him up here, give him the opportunity to find in the Barren Grounds what we have found. And not once did we think of anything else. 'Fess up, now. You're jealous, aren't you?"

"Jealous!"

"Come clean. I am. You are. Only Tom is not. It's the most natural thing in the world. We've built a fence around that boy. We've guided every action, unconsciously have tried to guide every thought of his. We've come to think he's ours, ours alone.

"But let me tell you something," and Jimmie Dunn spoke so seriously Marshall halted and looked at him. "Let me tell you that we're on the verge of ruining everything. I know. I was a fool once. When we went out to the States that time and you—you met some one, Marsh, and didn't want to go back, I was jealous, jealous as a fool. I went off alone, without saying good-by to you, and I had to be captured by Mitchell and his outfit and you had to leave that baby and his mother and come up and find me to prove how big a fool I had been. Now don't you be a fool about the boy."

Again they walked on in silence. It was the first time Jimmie Dunn had ever spoken of his action of a quarter of a century before. Neither had liked to think of it, of the thing which had come so near wrecking their friendship.

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"Of course," Jimmie Dunn continued after a while, "we may be all wrong. We may have no cause for—for—well, for talking this way."

"Jimmie!" cried Marshall as he turned and faced his friend. "I hope there is. We have been fools. We have trained that boy for one thing, robbed him of other things. But he's a man now, his own man, and I, for one, hope that she thinks as much of Jimmie Lad as we do. I'll thank Providence, or propinquity, or whatever it is that does the trick, that she is a real woman instead of an imitation.

"We found each other up here in this country, Jimmie, you and Tom and I. Let's hope the boy finds his mate in the Barren Grounds. I can't wish him more."

"You're right, Marsh, and I, for one, am not going to let Jimmie Lad look at me again as he did when he thought we weren't going to search for her brother. And if we don't find that oasis but the lad finds something better, me for it. Only this isn't getting any meat."

There had been several herds in sight from the top of the ridge where they had camped, and after half an hour of stalking the two were close enough to get what they wanted. The remainder of the afternoon was spent in packing the meat to camp, and the next morning the two canoes started down the Thelon.

At Tom's suggestion they traveled a quarter of a mile apart.

"If those two half-breeds are waiting to pot us, we'll have a better chance," he said. "They don't know about two more joining us."

But they paddled down-stream all day without seeing any one, and that night they reached the mouth of the Hanbury.

"There is a long portage up the river a little ways," Helen told them. "If those two went up, on their way back to Fort Resolution, they would have left signs there."

"Fine!" exclaimed Jimmie Dunn. "We'll look into that right away, for we want to know where those fellows are. We would be foolish to start hunting for your brother where there is a possibility of our being potted any minute. And we'd better all go. It's the safest thing not to split up."

Tired as they were, they went on up the Hanbury to the portage of which Helen had spoken. Tom Gill was the first ashore.

"Camped here," he announced. "Yes, and they went across. They've gone back to Great Slave Lake, and the ammunition with them."

He looked questioningly at the others.

"It's a long chase and an uncertain one," said Marshall. "We might get them, and we might not. Time's precious as well as ammunition. I think we had better turn back."

Jimmie Lad shot a grateful glance at his father and ran to the canoes.

"Now for the cairn that was torn down!" he cried.

In half an hour they had reached the spot of which Helen had told, where Mark Avery had declared a cairn had been demolished. All four men immediately began to examine the spot, and it was Tom Gill, upon whose judgment in such matters the others always relied, who made the report.

"Those rocks were piled up here once," he said. "But it might have been one year ago or five. There's no sign of a record being left, and there's nothing about the rocks, of course, that would tell it was Helen's brother who built it."

"Then he don't know!" cried the girl. "We can't tell whether he was here—whether we should look for him up-stream or down?"

"I'm not through yet," answered Tom. "There's another way to go at this. If Jerry landed here, he'd sit down to write the record while his men built the cairn. He'd pick out a nice rock to sit on while he wrote."

He looked around. So did the others. There were several boulders which might have served the purpose. Each went to one and searched on and around it. The men did not find anything, but Helen, who had gone to a large flat rock nearer the river, called to them. They ran to her and saw that she was peering into a crevice beneath the rock.

"Can we get that?" she asked excitedly as she pointed. "I think I know what it is."

Tom found a piece of driftwood and pried away a small rock so that Jimmie Lad could thrust his hand into the crack. He drew out a blackened cylinder of metal about two inches long.

"That's it!" cried Helen hysterically. "It's the silver cap of his indelible pencil. I bought it for him before he left."

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"And he sat here writing his record, and it dropped down there, and he didn't find it," added Jimmie Lad.

"Then this is his cairn, and he reached the mouth of the Hanbury after his trip up the upper Thelon and then went down-stream from here," Jimmie Dunn summarized. "Which means we go down-stream, too."

"And his cairn was torn down by some one who took pains to do a thorough job," said Marshall.

He did not complete the thought in words. It had been considered before, but more as a possibility. Now they felt certain. Now they knew that no accident, no ill-luck of the trail, was responsible for the failure of Jerry Corwin to return. The destruction of the cairn meant a human agency. The motive for the destruction meant a desire to remove all traces of the young man's journey. Such a desire could emanate only from the necessity to cover up a crime.

CHAPTER IX

THE MAN WITH THE DROOPING FACE

WHILE Marshall Wells and Jimmie Dunn made camp, Tom and Jimmie Lad took a canoe and set two fish-nets in the river. No one ever travels the Barren Grounds without a fish-net and, in addition to the one the two older men had brought, there had been one in the half-breeds' canoe.

The men had decided that, to conserve ammunition, they would catch fish whenever there were time and a place to set a net. The lower Thelon, they found, was filled with the best varieties, lake-trout and whitefish, and they determined not to use a cartridge except when necessary.

Now that they were committed to the search for Jerry Corwin, Marshall and Jimmie Dunn brought all the skill and wisdom of twelve years in the Barren Grounds to the aid of their problem. Things half or wholly forgotten, little tricks and schemes, were resurrected. They took every precaution, always looked ahead. They became, in fact, the guiding spirits of the expedition.

In reality, except for sharing Helen's anxiety as to the fate of her brother, they were having a good time. Miraculously, it seemed, the days of old had been given back to them.

There had been the intention, of course, of reliving past experiences when they had planned the expedition in search of the oasis. That, however, would have been child's play to these men, for whom the greatest glory of the Barren Grounds was found in the odds they faced. They had started on a journey well-equipped. They knew the dangers and had planned for them. Because they were experienced woodsmen they could not add zest to their expedition by deliberately failing to provide adequately.

Now, entirely without their seeking it, a handicap which would have discouraged less virile men had been imposed. There was the known danger of such a journey with their meager supply of ammunition. There was the added risk of the unknown, a peril other than the many Nature offered. The demolished cairn had made this certain.

But the two veterans of the Barren Grounds were thrilled by the challenge, were prepared to exact to the utmost every ounce of joy from their endeavors.

The party traveled down the river slowly. One canoe on one side, the other across, they searched the banks. The work was comparatively easy as the current was fairly swift and no rapids of any sort were encountered.

On either side there was timber, though they were far north in the Barren Grounds. While they had expected to find spruce here, for one white man who had traveled the lower Thelon years before had reported it, its presence was still a source of wonder. Behind them the northern limit of timber was two hundred miles in a southern direction, twice as far in the southeast.

Yet each day they traveled between wooded banks. To be sure, the trees were usually stunted, though sometimes they saw spruce that would be considered large in any country. Often a few trees were scattered over much ground, and frequently there were stretches of river bank entirely bare.

Still, there were trees, fuel for cooking and for warmth. The limit of the forest was only a short distance from the river. Beyond were the Barren Grounds, except where the forest followed tributaries as far as they could see.

It was a pleasant journey. The sun was bright; the wind was gentle; the temperature was not too low. On either side,

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beyond the ribbon of spruce, the land swept away in immense plains, stretching farther than the eye could reach. And all this land was carpeted with flowers.

"And that's what they call the 'Barren Grounds,'" Jimmie Lad once remarked as he turned to point out to Helen a great patch of blossoms.

They always had, too, a full larder. Fish were more plentiful than any of the men had ever seen them. While they did not shoot, they were comforted by tracks of moose and bear on the banks. Every hour they saw caribou. Twice they saw musk-ox, and often they found signs of these animals.

After three days a straight fish diet began to pall on Helen Corwin. The men noticed it at breakfast and exchanged glances. That noon Marshall and Helen took one canoe, Tom the other. Jimmie Dunn and Jimmie Lad remained on the north bank and went inland, each with a rifle. They were to meet ten miles down the stream that night, and their supper was to be of musk-ox or caribou.

"Let's wait until late on the chance of getting a musk-ox," said Jimmie Lad as soon as he and his foster-uncle were out of hearing. "We can get deer any time, and, besides, they're not fit to eat now, with the bot-flies driving them crazy."

"In other words, you never killed a musk-ox, and you want to try it," laughed Jimmie Dunn. "But you want to remember, lad, that they are different from deer, or even moose. If you don't knock a bull down, he makes straight for you."

Often, as they walked across the prairie, they encountered small bands of caribou. Some, driven mad by the flies, were running in every direction, plunging and kicking, shaking their heads and paying no attention to the strange animals that walked on their hind legs.

But not once did they see even fresh signs of musk-ox. They swung far inland and then back to the edge of the timber along the river and away again. On their second swing riverward they began to abandon hope of getting the bigger game and looked for caribou near the river. As Jimmie Dunn pointed out, there was no need to pack meat when it would walk into camp.

That universal signal on the Barren Grounds, a smoke beacon, was to mark the stopping-place of the canoes that night, and, as they went toward the river, they watched for it, though it was still an hour of camping-time.

"There it is!" Jimmie Lad exclaimed at last. "Down in that thick bunch of timber. We'll have to pick out a deer near there. What's the matter with that herd to the right?"

"Where do you see smoke?" asked Jimmie Dunn after looking toward the river.

"There," and the younger man pointed.

"That! What's the matter with Marsh and Tom? That's no smoke signal. It's from a dry-wood fire. Couldn't see that two miles. A Barren Grounds signal is made with moss. You can see it as far as you can see anything."

"Maybe they've just started a camp-fire and won't make the signal until they expect us," suggested Jimmie Lad.

They swung at right-angles to their course and started toward the deer.

"We ought to get a fair bull or two out of that bunch," remarked Jimmie Dunn as they approached the herd in the shelter of a slight hollow.

Jimmie Lad turned to look; then he stopped suddenly.

"That's funny," he said. "There is the river over there," and he pointed toward the south, "and the smoke is a good half-mile back from the water, in the middle of that big patch of timber."

JIMMIE DUNN studied the situation for a moment and then started straight toward the smoke, regardless of the caribou.

"Come on," he said. "We've got to look into this. In the first place, that's not a signal-fire. Smoke's too light. Mostly dry wood. And in the second place a fire in this country is pretty certain to mean Corwin or some one who knows about him. Let's get into this hollow."

They dropped into a swale between two rounded billows of the prairie and, crouching, hurried toward the shelter of the timber. Before they reached it, they took their bearings with the sun and the thin column of smoke that arose above the spruce and then started straight toward it.

"We must be quiet about this and not let them know we're here," whispered Jimmie

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Dunn as they went forward. "It may explain what we want to know, and we can't take chances."

The deeper they went into the timber the thicker it became, and the larger the trees. Some were two feet or more at the butts. Small spruce grew beneath the larger ones, and, as they neared the center, this brush became thicker.

They could not see the smoke but believed they were near it, and they were careful not to make any noise. Then they heard a voice directly in front and dropped instantly to the ground.

"That was a white man," whispered Jimmie Dunn. "Did you hear it?"

"Then we're all right," said Jimmie Lad.

"No, we won't take chances. That destroyed cairn might mean anything. We can't afford to make a mistake. There's plenty of time to expose ourselves after we find there's nothing to be learned by keeping hidden."

They crept forward a few inches at a time, clearing away dried twigs from in front, carefully holding the brush aside. In ten minutes they had covered ten yards. The voices were more plainly heard now, though they could not distinguish words.

The ground in front suddenly sloped upward. They crawled to the crest and pushed aside the bushes.

Beneath them, in a straight-walled gulch, was a small stream. At the base of the opposite wall two men were finishing a meal beside a dying fire. Jimmie Dunn stared and suppressed an exclamation. Then he gripped Jimmie Lad's arm and frowned at him, a finger to his lips. The young man nodded that he understood.

The strangers clearly did not suspect the presence of the two at the top of the gulch and finished their meal, which consisted solely of boiled meat.

Though both were clad entirely in skin clothing, one was a white man and the other an Indian. The white man had a full beard, a luxuriant brown mass that completely covered the lower part of his face. His hair was long and unkempt, and it was thickly sprinkled with gray.

The marked feature, however, was the right eye. The lid drooped over more than half the eyeball, and habitually he held his head tilted far back that he might see through the narrow opening.

His head was large and, with the thick beard and long hair, seemed even larger. His neck was short, his body thick and heavy. It was a figure that failed to carry any suggestion of strength, however, and became grotesque rather than formidable.

The Indian, too, suffered from a deformity, but it added to his sinister aspect. His body was large and well-developed; his movements were those of medium age; his eyes were keen and hard. But his face was that of an old man, deeply wrinkled and framed by long, coarse hair. One side of the crown of his head was bald and seemed to have been crushed in. The center came to a sharp peak, while the other side was normal.

As there was something repellant about the white man, there was something villainous about the Indian. Together they formed a combination that savored far more of the underworld of a big city than of the free, wide spaces of the Northland.

For a moment Jimmie Dunn stared at the white man and then turned a horrified face to his companion. His lips formed the word—

"Corwin?"

Jimmie Lad shook his head emphatically. He had seen Jerry's picture, and he was sure that the man could not be Helen's brother.

As the strange pair sat beside the campfire it was easily apparent that the Indian was the dominant character. The white man was nervous. There was a suggestion of apprehension even in his simplest actions and in his attitude. His eyes were never still; his hands were in constant motion.

When the meal was finished, the Indian swung a small kettle over the coals. Then, in perfect English, he said:

"Get out your things now. The water will be warm soon."

The white man hesitated.

"Come," and the Indian spoke sharply, "the sooner it is over the better."

The white man drew a small, dirty bundle from a bag beside him and opened it. He took out a pair of shears and a shaving outfit. The Indian thrust a finger into the water.

"Use the shears first," he commanded.

The white man gathered his beard in his left hand and began to cut it off. He worked slowly, ineffectually. With an expression of disgust the Indian took the shears from him and quickly trimmed the beard.

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"Now the soap and brush," he said. "The sooner this is done the better. You said that yourself."

The white man lathered his face and began to shave. It was a long, slow job. He set a small mirror in a niche in the rock wall and knelt before it, his back to the two watchers on the other side. When at last he finished and turned around, Jimmie Lad could see his foster-uncle strain quickly forward and stare through the brush. His frown, his slightly parted lips, told how he was searching his memory, how he was groping without success for something hidden in his brain.

Jimmie Lad forgot this, however, when he saw the white man's beardless face. The drooping eyelid had been a distinguishing mark. Now the man presented a face that would always be remembered.

One side of it was normal. The other drooped, from the eyelid to the cleft chin. Temple, cheek, mouth and jaw sagged in a grotesque leer.

That it was some queer freak of muscular control or nervous trouble was evident at once. There are men who could have battled with such a handicap, who could have risen by sheer personality. This man evidently had succumbed to his facial deformity. Weakness of character, a spirit which seemed to be broken, accentuated the droop of one side of his face.

IT WAS a face which would never be forgotten, and Jimmie Lad, too, found himself searching his memory. He did not know that he had ever seen the man before—and yet he felt that he had; that there was something familiar in the distorted expression.

When the white man had finished shaving, the Indian began to sharpen a big knife. He whetted and whetted, felt of the edge, stropped it on his leather leggings and returned to his whetting.

The white man watched him in fearful fascination. Unconsciously he drew back against the rock, while the Indian whetted and stropped imperturbably. At last the red man pulled a hair from his head and drew it across the blade.

"That's all right now," he said calmly. "Are you ready?"

He glanced up, and the other drew back in terror.

"No!" he cried. "No! The beard will do!"

"But you haven't a beard now."

"It will grow quickly, before we——"

"You know we have talked that all out," and for the first time the Indian's voice was raised. "You know that a beard is no disguise. That eyelid alone would arouse memories. The beard would bring suspicion."

Still the white man hesitated, eying the knife with increased fear.

"You are safe," sneered the Indian. "You have seen to that. No matter what I might do, I've got to get you back alive."

"All right," agreed the other. "Be quick."

He lay full length on the ground and closed his eyes. Although he strove to be calm, his body trembled.

"Bah!" exclaimed the Indian in disgust. "You will jump at the first touch. You haven't the courage to let me finish. I'll bind you first."

He unwound a coil of leather thongs. The white man sat up, started to rise, a complete victim of his terror. The Indian thrust him back.

"Don't be a fool!" he commanded sharply. "The sooner this is over the better."

He did not try to hide his contempt, nor was he gentle in his work. He wound the thong around and around the other's body, lashing his arms tightly to his sides, binding his legs together their entire length. When the task was completed to his satisfaction, the white man could neither bend nor move.

The Indian picked up his knife and sat down astride the other's chest. With his left hand he turned the white man's face toward the two watchers on the other side of the gulch and held his head down with all his strength. He took the knife by the blade and held it over his victim's face.

Jimmie Lad started involuntarily to rise, but his foster-uncle held him down and motioned for silence.

"Shut your eyes," commanded the Indian. "And don't move."

There was a quick motion of his right hand, and the white man's forehead, eyebrow and temple on the deformed side were slit open. He screamed, struggled, tried to throw off the Indian.

Again the knife flashed, and there was a parallel cut lower, across the nose and cheek beneath the eye. The white man's

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protest became frenzied. The Indian clung to his seat and held his head against the ground.

Jimmie Lad, sickened, furious, again started to his feet.

"Keep quiet!" hissed Jimmie Dunn fiercely, and he held the young man back.

His voice was not heard across the creek. The white man was screaming continuously now, shrieking from fear, not pain, and while he shrieked the Indian calmly slashed again, this time from the base of the nose along the lip and across the face.

A fourth time he drew the keen edge across, this time through the cleft in the chin and along the line of the jaw and a little above it. Then he calmly arose, wiped the blade of the knife and stood looking down upon the results of his work.

The screaming had ceased. The white man's head rolled over. He had fainted. Against the blood that flowed into his eyes and mouth his skin was deathly white.

The Indian was not through. He had a needle and heavy thread ready, and, while his victim was still unconscious, he took rapid stitches in the slashes he had made. As far away as they were, Jimmie Dunn and Jimmie Lad could see that he did not draw the edges of the cuts closely together; that he took only two stitches in each, puckering the slashes, leaving the sides gaping.

Finally he took a small pouch of dried herbs or fungus from a bag and rubbed some into the wounds. In a moment the bleeding stopped, and the Indian arose and prodded the unconscious man with a moccasined foot.

"Wake up," he said. "Now you will be a beauty, and your story of being clawed by a bear will be believed."

The white man did not stir, and the Indian brought water and bathed the uninjured side of his face, being careful not to touch the wounds for fear of starting the bleeding again.

The white man opened his eyes and attempted to get up.

"Wait a moment," said the Indian. "It's done. I sewed them up. Will you promise not to tear them open?"

"Yes."

The Indian stooped to untie the thongs that bound the man. As he did so Jimmie Dunn touched his companion on the arm and pointed to his rifle. He thrust his own through the brush.

"That will do, Mitchell!" he commanded.

The Indian leaped to his feet and sprang to one side. Jimmie Dunn's rifle cracked, and its owner cried:

"Not another move, George! Up with your hands! There, that's right. Get down there, Jimmie Lad, and keep him covered till I come. I think we're on the right trail now."

CHAPTER X

PROPHECY OR THREAT?

JIMMIE LAD crawled through the brush, leaped down into the little gulch and threw up his rifle.

"Don't move," he warned as the Indian, who held his hands above his head, turned to face him.

But the Indian was not looking at the young man. He was watching Jimmie Dunn scramble more slowly down the side of the gulch, and, as he caught the first glimpse of the white man's face, his own hard visage twisted into a snarl and his eyes blazed the most malignant hatred Jimmie Lad had ever seen.

It flashed for an instant. Then the Indian's expression became as it was before. Under cover of the noise made by Jimmie Dunn's descent, he spoke to his companion in a low, tense voice:

"Not a word, or I'll kill you. It's our only chance."

Jimmie Lad caught only the last sentence, and his watchfulness increased until Jimmie Dunn stood beside him.

"Now," commanded the older man, "we must tie Mitchell's hands behind him. Take one of the thongs off the other fellow and do it while I keep him covered."

Jimmie Lad did as he was bid. He approached the Indian carefully, for the man most evidently was alert to any possibility of escape. But he obeyed the order to clasp his hands at his back, and the thongs were quickly tied.

His uncle's assurance of the man's identity had made doubt impossible. Still, in the face of this evidence, it seemed unbelievable to Jimmie Lad that he stood before the medicine-man, who as leader of the Chippewyans had almost accomplished his Uncle Jimmie's death in his diabolical scheme of persuading the Indians that Jimmie Dunn had turned their best

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hunter into a white man. Then he remembered Tom Gill's description of his revenge, and he burst forth:

"But he was killed! Tom Gill killed him when he and father rescued you."

"I know it. That's what Tom thought, and we did, too. Tom hit him over the head with the butt of his rifle. He dropped like a log, and Tom always said he could feel his skull crack. But this is Mitchell just the same. See his head. It looks as if some one had tried to remodel it."

The Indian glared at them so malevolently that Jimmie Lad was fascinated by the intensity of his hatred. Then he turned to his foster-uncle.

"You know the other one, the white man, too," he said.

"I've seen him, but I can't remember where. What's your name?" and he stepped closer to the man whose face had been slashed.

Bound, helpless, not yet recovered from the surprize occasioned by the sudden appearance of the two who had made him prisoner, the man with the drooping face only stared at Jimmie Dunn. With his fresh gashes, the abject fear in his eyes, he was a horrible object. There was that about him which made them feel that, had he not been bound, he would have groveled at his captors' feet.

It was a relief to turn back to George Mitchell, whose fighting hate at least commanded respect. Ever since he could remember, Jimmie Lad had heard of this Indian, the Chippewyan with part of the blood and most of the brains of a white man, the man who had debased and deluded a group of otherwise harmless Indians, fooling them with his conjuring tricks, poisoning their minds, making outlaws of them—and all because he delighted in the power he had gained.

Every trick of this man Jimmie Lad had known. His father, Jimmie Dunn and Tom Gill had often described him, had often related the story of how he had kept Jimmie Dunn prisoner between the upper Thelon and Great Slave Lake, in a place uninhabited, untraveled, wholly unknown to white men.

And, as Jimmie Lad looked at him, he realized the possibilities of his capture. If he had held Jimmie Dunn prisoner, was it not most probable that he and his band of renegade Chippewyans had done the same thing with Jerry Corwin? Most evidently he had held this white man in his power.

In his excitement and his elation over this possibility of immediate news of Helen's brother, he turned to Jimmie Dunn.

"This explains it!" he cried. "If Mitchell held you, and this man, he is the one who——"

"Shut up!" commanded Jimmie Dunn sternly.

Jimmie Lad, indignant, then resentful because of his foster-uncle's tone, was about to retort when he caught a warning glance.

"Here," said Jimmie Dunn. "Tie Mitchell to a tree so he can't get loose."

He jerked his head backward slightly as he finished speaking, and Jimmie Lad, understanding that he had some plan, obeyed without comment.

"That's enough," said Jimmie Dunn. "Come here."

He led the way up the gulch a few yards, and then, when Jimmie Lad joined him, he whispered:

"Don't mention Corwin. If they know anything about him, they won't give us a hint. We'll have to pretend we're after something else. Mitchell is a wise one, and we must be mighty careful or spoil our chances."

"But the other one!" objected Jimmie Lad. "He must be a prisoner, too. He ought to talk."

"Maybe, but I don't think so. There's something queer in this. He's afraid of Mitchell, and yet he let him slash his face. We saw that. Somewhere in the back of my head is an explanation of this. I'll remember soon. In the meantime we can ask him."

They returned to their prisoners, and Jimmie Dunn began to unbind the white man. He unwrapped the long thongs from around his body and then helped him to a sitting position. The man was stiff and cramped, and instinctively he raised his hand to his bloody face.

"Now," began Jimmie Dunn quietly, "tell us who you are and what this is all about. We're white men, and we're friends if you're needing help. There isn't another white man within three or four hundred miles of here, and we're willing to do what we can for you."

The man's eyes, still revealing his terror, were turned for an instant toward Mitchell.

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Jimmie Lad saw a tightening of the Indian's lips and a frown which conveyed an unmistakable message. The man looked back at Jimmie Dunn, but he did not speak.

"Come, come!" commanded Jimmie Dunn. "We're not going to harm you. We haven't any desire to do so, nor any reason for it."

His prisoner only stared, and he kept his lips tightly compressed as if he were making a physical effort to obey the silent command from Mitchell.

Jimmie Dunn, exasperated, arose to his feet.

"Very well," he snapped. "If you want to put yourself in a class with Mitchell, go ahead. But I'll tell you right now that, if you do, you'll be treated as he is treated. George Mitchell is the worst scoundrel the North country has ever known, and this time he's going out to get what he deserves. You talk, or you go with him as an accomplice."

For a moment Jimmie Dunn thought he had won. The man leaned forward, opened his lips as if he were about to speak.

"Don't!"

THE word seemed to crack from Mitchell's lips, and the man with the drooping face sank back to the ground and stared at his captor's feet.

"So that's it!" cried Jimmie Dunn. "You're afraid of a scoundrelly Indian. You let such a cur as this tell you when to speak and when to keep silent. Here. Get up!"

He helped the man to his feet and told Jimmie Lad to stand guard over Mitchell. Then he led his prisoner down the gulch and around the bend. He had hoped that, away from the Indian, the white man might regain his self-control, might throw off the dominance of the other. But even before he started he knew he was defeated in his purpose, for George Mitchell's eyes with their malignant threat never left the other's figure, and the white man's fearful glances over his shoulder as he was led away told Jimmie Dunn that his terror could not be lessened by a mere matter of distance.

"Now look here," he said when they were out of hearing of the Indian. "I know all about this Indian, Mitchell. He kept me a prisoner for two years. I know just what sort of diabolical schemes he can be guilty of and I know he is as clever a scoundrel as ever entered the North country.

"But you needn't be afraid of him any more. I'll promise you that George Mitchell won't ever harm you or any one else again. You are safe from him. The Northwest Mounted would have had him twenty years ago if I hadn't reported that he was dead, and I was certain that he was. But this time there won't be any mistakes. So feel free to talk. Out with it."

For the first time the man looked up. Because of the horrible slashes and the drying blood Jimmie Dunn could get no idea of his purpose. His eyes, however, seemed to strive to tell a story. Misery and loneliness came first, and a haunting fear. Then a spark of resolution flashed, only to die instantly, and the hunted, slinking, indecisive expression returned.

"Good Lord!" cried Jimmie Dunn in exasperation. "Out with it! We'll not harm you, and Mitchell can't. What is there to be afraid of?"

The man looked away.

"You can talk. I heard you before Mitchell cut you up that way."

"You saw me!"

Never did Jimmie Dunn remember having seen such complete despair as was exhibited by the man's eyes. For a moment he stared, and then he covered his face with his hands, and his shoulders shook.

"Come, old man," said Jimmie Dunn gently, realizing that in the mutilation of his face lay the key to the man's strange terror and despair. "This won't do. You've been a long time from white people. I know how it is. But that's over now. Buck up. Perhaps I can help you."

The man looked at him long, searchingly. For a moment he seemed undecided as to his course. Then sullen terror and dogged obstinacy settled down in his eyes. He turned and walked up the gulch. Jimmie Dunn, baffled, mystified, followed.

He had not probed the other's secret. But he knew at least that it would not bear probing, and he no longer felt pity for the man with the drooping face. It was hard to meet Mitchell's glance of triumph when he returned. But he knew nothing more could be done then.

"Come, Jimmie Lad," he said. "We'll get over to the river. Tie their hands together with a thong about three feet long."

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"Now," he continued when this had been done, "march them east through this timber until you get outside of it and then look for the camp smoke. I'm going to hunt around a little."

He watched Jimmie Lad herd his prisoners down the gulch and then turned in the other direction.

Neither Mitchell nor the white man gave any trouble. Side by side, their hands bound behind them, they walked down the winding, straight-walled little cañon until they reached a place where the eastern bank sloped away and they were able to climb easily to the timber above. At their captor's direction they turned and, single file, went on through the spruce until, after a quarter of a mile, they came out upon the open, flower-strewn prairie, that broad, fair, colorful plain called the Barren Grounds.

Directly in front of him Jimmie Lad saw the smoke of the signal-fire, and he directed his prisoners to walk toward it. Two miles of prairie lay between them and the narrow fringe of trees along the Thelon from which the smoke arose. Half-way there Jimmie Lad caught sight of the tent through the trees.

"Now, Mitchell," he said when they were a short distance away, "I want you two to stay right here. No fooling. I know all about you, and I can shoot pretty straight. I'll have you in sight all the time, and I won't be out of range."

He left his prisoners in the open and then, walking to the edge of the timber, called to Tom Gill, whom he saw cooking before one of the tents. In a moment Tom, Marshall Wells and Helen were running toward him.

Before they reached his side, they saw the two men out on the prairie. Helen stopped, stared a moment and then ran forward so swiftly she outdistanced the men.

"Did you find him?" she called when she was still one hundred yards from Jimmie Lad.

He placed his fingers to his lips, ran toward her and then called:

"Don't speak! Not a word!"

He glanced over his shoulder and satisfied himself that his prisoners were so far away they had not heard either the girl or his own warning. Then the three dashed up, surrounded him and deluged him with questions.

"Please let me do the talking!" he begged. "It isn't Jerry Corwin, but we think it is going to lead to a trace of him. Those two men won't say a word, and, because they undoubtedly know about Jerry, we are going to get farther if we don't show our hand by letting them know that we are looking for him. That's what Uncle Jimmie decided, and it's going to be a good scheme."

"Where is Jimmie?" demanded Marshall Wells anxiously.

"He's all right, and he'll be back tonight some time. Now listen! One of those men out there is a white man. The other is an Indian, and his name is George Mitchell."

Jimmie Lad realized perfectly the dramatic value of such an announcement, and he made the most of it. He smiled as he finished; there was a twinkle in his eyes, and he looked closely at Tom Gill and his father.

"George Mitchell!" cried the old woodsman. "You're crazy, lad! I killed him with my own hands twenty-two years ago this coming Winter."

"I know he did," added Marshall Wells. "I saw him crush his skull with the butt of his rifle."

Jimmie Lad turned toward his prisoners and called to them to come forward.

"Now remember," he cautioned in a low voice as they started. "Not a word about Jerry Corwin. There's something queer about these two. I'll tell you later. They won't talk. So don't you, either. After we get them safe in camp, I'll tell you the rest of it."

Tom Gill and Marshall Wells, skeptical and yet bewildered by the confidence of Jimmie Lad's manner, hurried forward to meet the prisoners.

There was something aggressive in the old woodsman's stride. When he and Marshall had sought Jimmie Dunn twenty-two years before and had found him the victim of Mitchell's diabolical scheme, Tom had developed a hatred for the Indian which had intensified rather than abated, and despite the fact that he had believed the man was dead. Now, as he halted before the Indian, he stared malevolently.

"It is you, Mitchell!" he exclaimed at last. "And that head of yours shows that any ordinary man would have quit living after

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what I did to you. But this time I'm going to make sure, if I have to cut the black heart out of you."

Mitchell's expression did not change, but his eyes told of a hatred so intense that Helen Corwin drew back in fear.

"Perhaps," said Mitchell indifferently, "perhaps things will be reversed this time. You got your man then."

CHAPTER XI

THE WALL OF SILENCE

MARSHALL WELLS stepped forward quickly and confronted the Indian.

"What do you mean by that?" he demanded.

Mitchell looked at him but did not speak.

"What do you mean?" Marshall repeated.

The Indian remained silent. Tom Gill stepped closer menacingly, his head thrust forward.

"You'd better tell," he said in a low voice.

Mitchell stared at him for a moment, the same intense gleam of implacable hatred in his eyes, and then deliberately he turned his back.

"Never mind!" cried Tom chokingly. "I'll promise right now that you do tell."

Helen Corwin, who stood between Jimmie Lad and his father, had not moved or spoken since Mitchell had made his one statement. She had heard the story of how Jimmie Dunn had been held prisoner by Mitchell and his renegade band; how Tom Gill and Marshall Wells had gone into the Barren Grounds to rescue him. She knew something of the man's character, the possibilities of his evil intentions, and her first thought, after Jimmie Lad's warning that they keep silent about her brother, had been that he, as Jimmie Dunn had been, was in the Indian's power.

Mitchell's statement, enigmatical to a certain extent, did not impress itself upon her at first. Not until she heard Marshall Wells' quick questions, saw the manner in which he sought to learn more, did its real significance come to her.

Wide-eyed she stared for an instant. Then the color left her face. Her lips moved.

"Jerry! Oh, Jerry!" came in a whisper, and she swayed forward in a swoon.

Jimmie Lad caught the limp body and, with his father's help, lowered her to the ground.

"Is she dead?" he cried as he felt her face and wrists. "She hasn't died, dad?"

"No, of course not," Marshall replied. "She's only fainted. She thinks Mitchell meant her brother."

Jimmie Lad leaped to his feet, and Tom Gill's hatred was no greater as he faced the Indian.

"By ——!" he cried in a voice hoarsened by passion. "If you're responsible for that," and his trembling finger indicated the unconscious girl, "I'll kill you, and I'll take a —— long time in doing it!"

The anger of Tom Gill had been as a zephyr beside the tempest of fury which swept over the younger man. The primal rage of savage could not have been more terrible, and before it Mitchell quailed. There was the light of fear in his eyes. He shrank before Jimmie Lad's infuriated face.

Tom Gill, sensing the psychological change in Mitchell and seeking to press it, leaped forward and grasped the Indian's shoulder.

"Tell it!" he commanded. "Quick! What did you mean?"

But Tom had overplayed it. Perhaps, had he not laid his hand upon the man, his sudden fear would have resulted in their learning at least whether Mitchell had referred to Jerry Corwin or was only striking in the dark. The woodsman's hand had an instant and opposite effect upon the Indian. He turned savagely, fearlessly and glared at Tom.

Marshall Wells, who alone had remained cool, sprang forward and jerked his son and Tom away from Mitchell.

"Get hold of yourselves!" he commanded. "You're not getting anywhere, and there's a lot to be done. Tom, take the rifle and herd those two back to camp. Jimmie, get some water to bathe her face."

Jimmie Lad was off on a run, and Tom, driving the two prisoners, followed.

As Marshall lifted the girl's head, she opened her eyes.

"That's good," he whispered. "You're all right now."

She stared blankly for a moment, and then the fear returned to her eyes.

"Jerry!" she murmured. "Jerry's dead! He said so!"

"No, he didn't, and we don't even know

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that he ever saw Jerry," answered Marshall. "But we're going to find him—and find him alive. So brace up."

She struggled to rise, and he helped her to her feet. As she stood before him, she searched his eyes fearfully.

"Please don't keep anything from me," she said at last. "I won't faint again. I'll stand it."

"You know everything we do," Marshall answered. "We think that Mitchell knows where your brother is, but he won't talk. Perhaps Jimmie Dunn will have something to tell when he comes back tonight. In any event, we are nearer finding him now than we have been at any time."

"You mean we are if he is still alive."

"There is no more reason now to believe he is dead than before we found these two men. For my part, I am greatly encouraged."

She looked at him steadily for a moment and then smiled wanly.

"You'll have to make allowances for me," she said. "I'm so anxious, so worried, and —and I'm so afraid."

"Nonsense!" Marshall assured her. "You have been a mighty brave little woman, wonderfully brave, and you're going to win out."

He put an arm across her shoulders and drew her to him. No one had ever suspected how lonesome Marshall Wells had been since the death of Jimmie Lad's mother so many years before. Apparently he had been wrapped up in the boy, had forgotten everything else in his development.

When he had first seen Helen and had realized the possibilities of her being with Jimmie Lad on the journey into the Barren Grounds, he had resented her presence. Jimmie Lad had been his, his and Jimmie Dunn's and Tom's, a man-child, destined for those things which are men's only, trained for the test of the treeless waste. The Barren Grounds, he had reflected then, had brought the girl into Jimmie Lad's life under circumstances decidedly romantic. The thing for which he had been trained had been his undoing.

Then, that first day, Jimmie Dunn had opened the father's eyes, had pointed out the possibility of a great misunderstanding. Marshall began to watch Helen, to arrange that they should be alone together. His interest was aroused still more when he realized that inevitably a woman must come into his son's life, and he was thankful that it was in the Barren Grounds that she would do so, that it would be a woman unafraid of the North.

Marshall knew that neither Jimmie Lad nor Helen had spoken of love. There had been no time. Long hours in the canoe, the bending of every energy to the search for Jerry, the effort necessary to sustain life, all had precluded such a possibility.

But the father's eyes had seen and the better acquainted he became with Helen the greater was his joy. He began to adopt a paternal attitude toward her; suddenly had found her implanted within his own heart.

Helen must have realized something of this as the gray-haired man drew her to him. She glanced up shyly, hesitated, then suddenly threw her arms about his neck.

"You're a dear!" she cried, and she kissed his cheek.

"Thank you, little girl," answered Marshall huskily. "Now let's get back to camp."

When the four again confronted the prisoners at the bank of the river, they seemed to see the white man for the first time. In the excitement and passion of the encounter with Mitchell the other had escaped notice. Only subconsciously had they seen his gashed and bleeding face. Mitchell and what he might tell had occupied their thoughts to the exclusion of all else.

Now the blood-smeared countenance and the half-fearful, half-sullen attitude of the mysterious white man, the man with the drooping face, compelled attention. Even the men looked at him with pity in their eyes.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Marshall. "What has happened to you? Did Mitchell do that?"

The man did not answer. He glanced quickly at Marshall, and his eyes again sought the ground.

"Mitchell is fiend enough to do anything," growled Tom Gill.

"Wait!" exclaimed Jimmie Lad. "I'll tell you the whole thing later."

A WARNING glance accompanied his words, and Marshall and Tom did not protest as he led the prisoners down the bank and told them to sit upon a rock. They were out in the open, in plain view, and yet far enough from the camp to be beyond hearing.

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Marshall and Tom had their rifles across their knees and were waiting for the story of the capture when Jimmie Lad returned. Helen, a little fearful of what might be revealed, but having herself well in hand, sat beside them.

Jimmie Lad began with their first glimpse of the smoke in the timber and then related in detail everything that had happened. When he came to a description of how Mitchell had slashed the face of the white man, Helen could not suppress an exclamation of horror. Marshall and Tom were only mystified.

"And there it is, all I know," Jimmie Lad concluded. "They won't talk, so we've got to figure the whole thing out the best we can and then act."

"You say this white man objected to Mitchell cutting his face?" asked his father.

"He did, but it was because he was afraid of the pain. From the way Mitchell went at it, I think they had argued it out beforehand, only the fellow got cold feet when he saw the knife."

"And one side of his face drooped?" Marshall continued reflectively rather than as if he had asked a question. "And Mitchell said the beard was not a good disguise, eh? There's only one answer to that, to the whole thing. This white man is a fugitive from the law. A face such as you described would be known anywhere. The cutting was done to alter his appearance. As Mitchell said, it will look as if a bear had clawed him. And the scars will tend to tighten the skin, to lift the eyelid and all the rest of the face that sagged."

"Maybe," said Jimmie Lad, "but that's not the thing we're interested in. Now look here. It was from Mitchell's gang that Uncle Jimmie learned about this oasis in the Barren Grounds and the Indians who live in it. Mitchell's gang was planning on visiting it, and with only one object. Don't you think that, after you and Tom got through with that bunch and took Uncle Jimmie away from them, they went on with that plan and found the oasis, killed the Indians who lived in it and now live there themselves?"

"It is more than possible," admitted his father.

"Then don't you imagine, from the timber along the Thelon here and from what Uncle Jimmie learned then and from what we've doped out since, that the oasis is pretty close to the Thelon, maybe not far from where we are right now?"

Marshall nodded.

"Then, if Jerry Corwin came down the Thelon here, isn't it likely that he saw some of Mitchell's gang? If Mitchell saw him, he'd be up to his old tricks. He'd make a prisoner of him on some pretext or other, just as he did with Uncle Jimmie. He has brains enough to go back and tear down that cairn at the mouth of the Hanbury and any other he could find."

"The lad's right," interrupted Tom Gill. "That's what's happened, and now it's up to us to find this oasis and get Jerry Corwin out."

"That's going to be like hunting for a needle in a haystack," said Marshall.

"It's not!" declared Tom so savagely the others looked at him quickly. "What would Mitchell do in such a case? You know. And we'll do the same to Mitchell. We'll make him talk."

Neither Marshall nor his son spoke. Whatever he may have thought of Mitchell, Marshall's attitude had remained impersonal. It was not in him to hate as Tom had come to hate the captor of their friend. Jimmie Lad, though he had often heard the story of what Mitchell had done, likewise had failed, because of time, distance, the lack of contact, to develop a personal animosity.

Tom Gill was implacable, however. In that long journey in search for Jimmie Dunn, in the trying days of hunger, privation and what seemed inevitable death, his mind had dwelt only upon the diabolical scheme of the conjurer and what he intended to do to the woodsman's comrade.

It had been a hate-compelling picture. Accused by Mitchell of turning their best hunter white, though the medicine-man knew perfectly well that a disease, not the white man's conjury, was responsible, Jimmie Dunn had been held for two years to become the victim of the fear-aroused passions of the band of renegade Chippewyans. Each day he had watched the progress of the disease, had watched the man's face turn white until one small, dark spot remained. Each day he was impressed with the fate that would be his did he not reconjure the Indian to his normal color.

Tom Gill and Marshall Wells knew all

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this, from Jimmie Dunn's records, as they sought him. They knew what he faced; they were driven to a frenzy of anxiety because they might arrive too late, and the experience had seared itself upon the woodsman's soul. Single-minded and direct, seeing only immediate causes and effects, overflowing with affection for his comrade of many perilous journeys, Tom had emerged from the affair with an intense hatred in no wise diminished by the belief that the butt of his rifle had ended Mitchell's career. Perhaps it was the fact that he had failed, that his vengeance had miscarried, that had brought about a revivification of his wrath.

"The stake's too good for him!" Tom exclaimed when the others did not comment. "And with all his infernal tricks he is yellow. Just a match under his chin will make him talk. Or," and his eyes gleamed with the thought, "we can strip him and stake him out with his hands tied for an hour or so."

"Stop that, Tom!" Marshall exclaimed. "We're not savages, and the mosquitoes would kill him."

"But he's a savage," argued Tom. "He'd do it in a second if he wanted to know anything. There never was any worse torture than what he did to Jimmie Dunn through those two years. He's a savage, and he deserves savage treatment."

"Stop it, Tom!" commanded Marshall. "I won't listen to it. We're white men, and the mere fact that distance from civilization affords us unbridled license is not a just reason for our forgetting ourselves."

"Marsh," retorted Tom, "you're soft from living in the city so long. This isn't a city, and city ways won't do. Mitchell's the worst brute unhung, and you balk at giving him a little of the pain he deserves when a white man's life depends on it. Leave it to Miss Helen here."

The girl, startled by the suddenness of the proposal, stared at Tom and then glanced at the others.

"Remember," urged the woodsman, "what it means. He'll talk if we persuade him right."

"No! No!" Helen cried in horror. "We can't do that! Jerry wouldn't want us to. I couldn't stand it. There must be some other way."

"What other way?" demanded Tom, though he addressed Marshall and Jimmie Lad. "What other way is there? We don't know where Mitchell's bunch is. It may be any place within a hundred miles in any direction. The longer we wait the less the chances. What other way is there?"

He glared at the two men belligerently, and they did not answer. They knew he was right.

CHAPTER XII

BLIND TRAILS

BEFORE Tom could press his his point, Helen caught sight of Jimmie Dunn coming through the narrow band of timber. His manner told them that he brought good news.

"What did you find out?" was the first question that greeted him as he entered the camp.

"Several things. But I captured two rifles and four hundred rounds of ammunition. Found them in their packs. That will help a lot. The other things may be important, and they may not. Jimmie Lad told you everything about what we saw, didn't he?"

They nodded, and he continued.

"Well, I tracked them back up that creek bed for a mile. They didn't dodge any wet places, and it was easy. After a while it began to look as if it were too easy. That white man especially seemed to go out of his way to get his moccasins wet. I got to figuring out that it meant just one thing. They were trying to throw some one off the track."

The others only stared questioningly, and he went on:

"See here. Both these men have brand-new outfits of skin clothing. It hasn't been worn hardly at all, for it's pretty clean. Their moccasins are new, too. Only a short journey could have left them in such condition.

"Then I went through their packs there at the place where we found them. I brought in the rifles and the ammunition. But don't you see what that four hundred rounds mean? They aren't on any hunting-trip. They're on a long journey and, with the first point, they've just started.

"Again, they had a lot of dried meat and pemmican. That's another point. Concentrated food at a time of year when any

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one can shoot his way as he goes. It means that they didn't want to risk having some one hear them shoot—and that they were in a hurry. They had a caribou robe apiece, two small axes—and that's all. Their packs were fairly heavy, but they were really traveling light, when you consider distances.

"After I'd found the place where they came to the creek, tracking wasn't so easy. I circled and swung back and forth to a point two miles farther south, and twice in that time I found their tracks. They were heading straight south to the river here. Another thing. They built a cooking-fire that smoked. That's what led us to them. Now you know what I do."

"Then you think," asked Marshall, "that they were leaving this part of the country and that they were expecting to be followed and planned to mislead any possible pursuers?"

"Exactly. And further. They were planning on going to the outside. Cutting the man's face up that way explains it. They wanted to disguise him, and they wouldn't do that unless they were going where they would meet white men."

"But Jerry Corwin?"

It was the question all had kept in their minds, but it had remained for Jimmie Lad, impatient and impulsive, to ask it.

"Wouldn't they talk?" asked Jimmie Dunn.

"Not a word, except something Mitchell said," Marshall answered. "When he saw Tom he said that, while Tom might make certain of killing him this time, he would still lose. 'You won't get your man,' were the words he used."

Jimmie Dunn frowned and looked at the prisoners. Tom Gill, seeing the question in that glance, immediately began to press his point. More vehemently than before, he urged the adoption of his plan to make Mitchell tell where Jerry Corwin could be found. He did not permit the assumption that Mitchell might never have seen the lost man. He took it for granted that the conjurer had captured Jerry, and with arguments that were unanswerable, except from the sole standpoint of civilized man's aversion to barbaric methods, he demanded that he be left alone with the Indian for a short half hour.

Jimmie Dunn listened without comment. Then, before he spoke, he looked at Marshall. Marshall returned his glance steadily, and instantly Jimmie Dunn understood his friend's attitude.

"Tom," he exclaimed, "you're nothing but a savage! You should have been an Iroquois and alive a couple of hundred years ago. No, it won't do. There are other ways."

"What are they?" demanded the old woodsman angrily.

The others had agreed silently with Tom a few minutes before, but Jimmie Dunn, knowing they were with him, did not hesitate to answer.

"Why, we can give them the third degree without the cruelty side of it," he said. "The four of us ought to have enough brains to catch them somewhere. One little slip and we can get the lever under, you know. Then it will be easy to pry the facts out of them."

"They won't talk!" exclaimed Tom in deep disgust.

"We'll make them," was the confident reply, and they started toward the prisoners.

But Tom Gill was right. For two hours they tried everything of which four active, desperate minds could conceive, but without avail. Not once did Mitchell speak. Not once did the white man open his mouth.

They separated the two, took Mitchell out of hearing, threatened him with violence, slow torture, even death, but the Indian maintained the traditions of his race. They led the white man away and adopted similar methods. They pitied him, condoled with him, wrought upon that racial feeling which should exist in a land where so few white men were to be found. But he seemed to have absorbed some of the Indian's ability to remain silent, to tell nothing either with tongue or expression. He grew more and more sullen, was not touched by any appeal, and at last they led him back with loathing and disgust.

"Now," said Jimmie Dunn when they had left the prisoners alone again, "we haven't even hinted at what we are after. I thought we might learn something if we kept that still, kept them guessing as to what we want up here. But we haven't; so it won't do any harm to let them know. No. Wait—" as Jimmie Lad's face showed his approval of the plan.

"We'll go at this scientifically, have a third degree of a strictly psychological nature. We'll bring the white man up here.

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You folks face him. I'll stand behind and suddenly slip Miss Corwin's picture of her brother before his face. You folks watch. That fellow may be able to keep his mouth shut, but he's a weak sister just the same. That will bring him if anything will."

The others agreed, as they would to any plan that offered hope, any except Tom's—as the woodsman noted with disgust—and Jimmie Lad and his father hurried away to bring the man.

He came hesitatingly. His sullenness ebbed, for there was an expression of elation in the faces of the others, coupled with a certain grimness, that made him tremble. Tom Gill, Jimmie Lad, Marshall Wells and Helen faced him, stared at him searchingly. Jimmie Dunn stepped behind him, and he shrank away. Then with a quick motion Jimmie thrust the photograph before the man's face.

He stared. His eyes widened. His glance shifted for an instant. Then his sullen expression returned.

"You scum!" cried Marshall Wells savagely. "You a white man! You're lower than any Dog-Rib that ever roamed the Barren Grounds. You know what we're after. You know where Jerry Corwin is, and you refuse to tell. Hell would be a heaven for you, you——"

He choked, stopped and then turned away.

Instantly the others were upon the man. They threatened, entreated, appealed to instincts which should be found in any human breast, but all to no avail.

Again they threw themselves into it. Like the smell of a fresh track to a hound, this knowledge that Mitchell and his companion possessed the secret of Jerry Corwin's disappearance drove them into a frenzy. But they exhausted themselves without gaining even the trace of a clue.

"Try Mitchell!" Marshall rasped.

They left the white man and hurried to the Indian, fifty yards away. Again they tried the trick of the photograph. Not a muscle in Mitchell's face quivered, but Tom and Marshall, knowing Indians, were looking only into his eyes. And they, despite the man's self-possession, told the story.

Maddened now, they sprang again to the attack. They even went so far as to pretend they would torture him, building a fire and heating an iron cleaning-rod red-hot. Mitchell laughed, and for the second time since his capture he spoke.

"I know you too well, Dunn," he said. "I lived with you for two years; you can't do it."

The assurance of the man robbed the inquisition of all its pretended frightfulness. Tom Gill laughed harshly.

"The bow and arrow is right," he said.

Then he wheeled upon Mitchell and shouted:

"You don't know me! You don't, but you're going to learn. I'm not so finicky. Wait!"

BOTH Marshall Wells and Jimmie Dunn knew that any further pretense of torture was futile. Mitchell was too clever, had pierced at once their abhorrence of such a course. They drew the infuriated Tom away. They walked despondently to camp. It was midnight. The sun had just set but was already giving evidences of its reappearance. They were now in a land, and a season, which does not know darkness, and only their tired bodies told them that it was long past the sleeping-hour.

"We'll have to take turns guarding these men," said Marshall. "I don't know of any other way to be certain we would find them when we waken. Two-hour shifts, and I'll take the first."

"What are we going to do now?" asked Jimmie Lad.

He was not so tired as the others, not so ready to quit, and a glimpse of Helen's eyes had fired him to fresh endeavor.

"Get some sleep the first thing," answered Jimmie Dunn. "Then in the morning two of us will take a swing around to the north and see if we can find where these two came from. Unless we can make these men talk, and I don't see how we're going to after what we tried tonight, there is nothing left to do except hunt. From what I know of Mitchell and the plans he was making when I saw him last, I'm convinced that he and his men found this oasis, killed or subdued the Indians who lived in it and are now living there. His men will be there, and if—and that's where we will find Corwin."

"It's a big job," said Marshall. "But it's the only thing we can do. You and Tom try it tomorrow, and then Jimmie Lad and I will go."

"Why can't all four of you go?" asked

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Helen quickly. "Two go one way and two another. I'll guard these men. If their hands are tied behind them, there will be no danger."

She looked at the men pleadingly, and Tom was the first to respond.

"She can do it!" he exclaimed. "And she isn't afraid to take a crack at them if they get funny. She fired three shots at those two half-breeds when they skipped away from us. And it will cut the time for searching in half."

The woodsman's confidence in Helen had increased each day he had been with her. Tom was always a strong partisan, admiring or ignoring, unshakable in his faith or deeply suspicious, and it was only because of his trust and admiration that he sometimes made mistakes in judgment. In any wilderness activity he would never concede that Jimmie Lad might fail. Now his faith in Helen Corwin was becoming unbounded, probably because he never had believed that women would ever attempt the things that she had done easily.

Marshall and Jimmie Dunn shared this faith in Helen and readily admitted that she had accomplished no less than many men could have done. Her undaunted courage on the upper Thelon had firmly established their respect. They were not carried away by their enthusiasm, however. They realized what a trying situation the girl had been through; how the final straws were being added by the discovery of Mitchell and his companion and their undoubted knowledge of Jerry. They knew there would be a strain in guarding the prisoners, and there was always the possibility in the Barren Grounds of something happening, of the searchers never returning.

"No," said Marshall, "I don't think it would be advisable. It is true that we could cover twice the territory, but we want to remember that the most valuable source of information is right here. Because we failed tonight, we must not abandon the attempt to make these men talk. Two can search, and the other two can try to break down one or the other."

Marshall stood the first watch and Jimmie Lad the second. After five hours' sleep Tom and Jimmie Dunn arose and started on Mitchell's back trail.

After breakfast Marshall and Jimmie Lad resumed their efforts to make the mysterious white man talk. They took him aside and began calmly and slowly to attempt to force information from him. Everything they could think of that might break down the barrier he had erected between himself and the others of his race was tried. But all was without result.

They went at Mitchell again, but at noon they abandoned their attempts and turned to the imperative question of food. They lifted the nets and found the supply insufficient.

"I'll go down-stream and try for a musk-ox," said Jimmie Lad.

He returned in time for supper, but without game. As he approached the camp, Helen saw him and told Marshall that he had news of some sort. His half-trot proclaimed his excitement.

"We're on the wrong track!" he exclaimed excitedly when he had taken his father and Helen out of hearing of the prisoners. "We're on the wrong side of the river. They came from the south."

"How do you know that?" asked Marshall.

"I found the canoe in which they crossed the river. It had been hidden down the shore about five miles, beside a small creek, in a hollow among some spruce brush. It was an old canoe and the bark had been split open in two places."

"Then these two didn't use it," said Marshall. "If they had, they would have been heading for there instead of here. It was probably left last year."

"That's what I thought at first," Jimmie Lad continued. "It was so old I thought it had been abandoned years ago, cached by some one who never came back. But I turned it over, and the planking inside was wet."

"Rain," said his father.

"But it was bottom up. Rain couldn't get inside."

"Then it leaked through the cracks in the bark."

"But the cracks were at one end. At the other end, which was higher, the planks and ribs were wettest. The canoe had been used within the last two days."

"It may be another party of Indians," Marshall suggested.

"Now listen!" Jimmie Lad exclaimed impatiently. "The canoe was cached in a place where the rocks were bare. You could walk all the way down this shore without leaving a track if you wished, and, where the canoe was, you'd have to go out of your way to leave footprints.

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"But there were tracks. If any one wanted to go north from the canoe, they could have had good walking on the rocks and out across the prairie. But Mitchell and the other one landed there in the canoe, and they went up the creek bed, stepping in muddy places and leaving tracks just as they did in this creek where Uncle Jimmie and I found them.

"Don't you see what they're trying to do? They're trying to throw some one off the trail, and I'll bet they planned on going back to the canoe along the river and getting it without leaving a trace."

Late that night Jimmie Dunn and Tom Gill returned. They had made a big circle to the north, reaching a point fifteen miles from the river, but nowhere had they seen a trace of any human being. Not once had they seen a signal-fire. As far as they could see in any direction there were no trees. They listened to Jimmie Lad's theory, based upon his discovery of the canoe. On their return they had brought the packs Mitchell and his companion had been carrying, and Jimmie Dunn reached into one and drew out a small leather bag of spruce-gum.

"I believe the boy is right," he said excitedly. "They were going back to the canoe, and they intended to fix it up and use it. This shows it. They could have crossed the river with it the way it is, but they couldn't travel up- or down-stream. And there was something funny about their going out of their way to make tracks along the two creeks. Tomorrow we'll cross over and look for the oasis on the south side of the river."

Jimmie Lad and his father took their turn the next day. They paddled to the south bank, waved to those in camp and disappeared among the trees. They promised to be back by midnight.

But midnight came, and Marshall and his son did not appear. Another day passed, and they did not come.

CHAPTER XIII

SAVAGE METHODS

THE absence of Jimmie Lad and his father caused little anxiety the first night. Both Tom Gill and Jimmie Dunn had boundless faith in them, knew the dogged determination of Marshall Wells. They knew that neither would leave anything undone which was necessary to discover the whereabouts of the oasis Indians, and the Barren Grounds night would permit a search to be made through the twenty-four hours if necessary.

The next morning they began to look confidently for the return of the two, and after lifting their nets they watched the opposite bank.

As the hours went by, however, both of the men began to feel a slight uneasiness. Neither confided this to the other, but each read the other's thoughts. After that their silence was only an attempt to keep their anxiety from Helen.

"I wish I could remember where I've seen that man," Jimmie Dunn said as they sat down before the tent. "I saw him only for a moment before Mitchell slashed him up. But it was a face you'd never forget."

"Don't know what good it would do," growled Tom. "He won't talk."

"It might surprize him into it. He thinks he's safe now, and I guess he is. Mitchell did a clever piece of work. Those scars will draw up the face so it will be completely changed."

For Helen's sake they tried to keep the talk desultory, but neither could conceal a restlessness in his movements nor refrain from frequent surveys of the opposite bank of the river. Helen alone was silent. As she watched the two men, she became aware of the tension that existed, realized that the conversation was merely an effort to reassure her and to cover their own thoughts.

The girl herself was undergoing a severe strain, a strain which seemed every minute to be carrying her to the breaking-point. She had known, despite the attempts of the men to hide their belief, that the presence of George Mitchell in the country near the Thelon held a menace to her brother's safety. Through all her long journey into the Northland, even when she had fled alone from her guides after the murder of Mark Avery, the belief that her brother still lived, that he was somewhere in the Barren Grounds awaiting her, had remained unshaken.

But the sullen silence of Mitchell, his cryptic remark to Tom Gill, the mystery of the white man who suffered himself to be so terribly disfigured, who was so completely under the Indian's dominance,

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and the consequent increased zeal of her four companions had brought a numbing fear.

Now there was added the anxiety over the absence of Jimmie Lad and his father. These men who had found her in the wilderness, who had so unselfishly devoted themselves to her cause, were now sacrificing themselves, perhaps even now had suffered the same fate as her brother.

Jimmie Dunn, who had been watching her anxiously through the afternoon, ascribed her silence, her drawn face and wide, dry eyes, to the cumulative effects of the strain she had undergone. A sense of his own inactivity, his own helplessness, added to his compassion and a growing apprehension for the safety of his two friends, produced a savage moroseness which Tom, keenly observant, soon detected.

The old woodsman prepared the evening meal, which, as all other meals, consisted only of boiled whitefish and lake-trout, without salt or seasoning of any kind. When they had eaten and it was time to feed the prisoners, he had his first opportunity to speak to Jimmie Dunn alone.

"You know what we've got to do now, don't you?" he whispered.

Jimmie Dunn did not answer. He had both expected and dreaded this interview, and now he tried to evade the other's look of challenging inquiry.

"Do you want to let those two run into a trap out there somewhere?" and Tom waved his arm across the river, "while we sit here and do nothing? Do you want anything to happen to Marsh or Jimmie Lad when we can find a way to stop it."

He glared at the silent Jimmie Dunn. But his anger was only a mask, a mask and a ruse. In reality the woodsman's anger had passed from the hot, impatient, heedless stage to that of cold, quiet determination. Nor did he believe for a moment that his own loyalty or anxiety was any greater than that of Jimmie Dunn's. But he was determined to win now, and he had chosen the right moment and struck the right note.

Tom knew the man with whom he had to deal. Had it been Marshall Wells he would have despaired of success. He knew his steady, solid, composed nature; had learned it in more trying situations than most men know. And he understood Jimmie Dunn equally well. He was as honorable and as just as Marshall, but there was that in his make-up which was more emotional. He was more susceptible to the emotions of love and hatred, more easily swayed by passion, and his sense of obligation to his comrades was an obsession.

Tom knew this—knew that, where Marshall Wells would never listen to forcing information from Mitchell, no matter what the situation, Jimmie Dunn would be influenced by the danger to his friends, would sacrifice anything to save Jimmie Lad and his father.

"I guess," said Tom shortly, "that the lad and Marsh are worth our little feelings in the matter."

The shot went home.

"It's a horrible thing," said Jimmie Dunn slowly, "but no more horrible than what may be happening to them."

Tom knew he had won. And he went about the details as methodically as he did all else.

"First we've got to get her out of the way," he said with a nod toward Helen. "Tell her to keep watch from the top of that ridge half a mile up the river. You can explain that we ought to watch for signal-smokes. She is nervous and will be glad to do anything to help."

Jimmie Dunn did so at once. Helen looked at him questioningly.

"What are you going to do?" she asked bluntly.

"We haven't decided, exactly," he replied. "We've got to do something. One of us should start out to search immediately. In the meantime there is a chance that a smoke-signal might be seen from that ridge. They would make one if they wanted us to come."

Again she questioned him with her eyes, but so sincere did he seem to be she finally assented.

"Hurry back if you see anything," he called as she started up the river bank.

Jimmie Dunn rejoined Tom, and they sat down as if to discuss their plans. When Helen was out of hearing, Jimmie Dunn said—

"It's Mitchell, of course."

"Maybe the other would scare into it without our doing any more than getting ready. Anyhow, a touch would be enough."

"No!" and Jimmie Dunn turned and faced his friend. "We may be forgetting

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we're white men, but we must not forget that he is. It must be Mitchell. But what will we do with the other?"

"Keep him right close!" declared Tom. "It's going to be hard to make Mitchell talk. He's an Indian, and we may have to go a long ways. The other's a weak sister, and just seeing it may loosen his tongue."

There was a look of desperate determination about Jimmie Dunn, and even Tom found it difficult to meet the other's eyes. There was nothing bloodthirsty about the old woodsman. Though his life had been spent in shooting and trapping wild animals, there was no cruelty in his make-up. His growl and his frown were only masks, for emotion distressed him, and his love for his three companions aroused many emotions.

Tom's love and loyalty were matched by those inevitably attendant qualities. He might overlook a slight to himself, a wrong or a danger, but he was aroused to a frenzy if anything threatened his three friends. They had been Tom's life—first Marshall Wells and Jimmie Dunn, and now Jimmie Lad. Had Mitchell captured him, he would have fought but never hated the man. But, when he captured Jimmie Dunn, he aroused in the woodsman a vindictiveness that had lasted more than twenty years after, as he believed, he had avenged his friend.

Had he stopped to consider the matter, his proposal might have seemed impossible in its performance. But, in addition to a more primitive nature than the others, he was intensely practical. His thinking was in straight lines. Results, not methods, counted. Since he had first confronted Mitchell, he had considered only what he would learn, not what extracting the information might mean.

WHEN Helen was well out of sight, Tom began his preparations. He built up the fire, went into the tent and found a cleaning-rod. After a careful examination he thrust it into the coals. Then he turned to his companion.

"Now we'll bring them up here," he said, and they went after the prisoners.

Merely being in Mitchell's presence always aroused Tom, and, as he halted the two beside the fire, he turned upon the Indian savagely.

"Now you're going to tell us something!" he snarled. "You're going to talk whether you want to or not."

The white man gasped and stepped back.

"And you, too!" cried Tom as he turned upon him. "You're no better than a dirty bow and arrow, refusing to help your own race. What Mitchell gets you get."

With a tracking line he began to bind Mitchell so that he could not move. He threw him roughly to the ground and tied his legs tightly together.

"Now," he said when his task was completed, "why not make him look the way he fixed the other one?"

He drew the red-hot iron from the fire and leaned over the Indian.

"Wait!" commanded Jimmie Dunn, who had taken no part in the preparations.

Tom wheeled upon him angrily, believing that at the last moment he had refused to go on.

"See here, Mitchell," Jimmie continued. "You know where Corwin is or what has happened to him. We want to know if he is alive and, if he is, where he is to be found. We want to know what may have happened to our two men who left yesterday morning. There is a good reason for their failure to return, and you know what it is. If they've run into your gang, we want you to tell us where they are, how many men you have and what our best chances are of getting them. Now you understand what we want to know."

He turned and took the red-hot iron from Tom's hands.

"I'm in this as much as you are," he said. "I'll begin."

He bent over Mitchell. The Indian stared up at him insolently, fearlessly. He did not speak, but his eyes told plainly what he thought. It was as unmistakable as if he had said:

"You can't do it, Dunn. You haven't got it in you."

It infuriated Jimmie. For thirty-six hours or more Marshall and his son had been out there on the Barren Grounds. Their failure to return was due, he knew, to Mitchell's Indians. And now Mitchell laughed at him.

With a quick movement he lowered the glowing rod to within a few inches of the Indian's face.

"Out with it!" he ordered. "Tell, or I'll burn to the bone."

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Mitchell's lips curled in a scornful smile. His eyes still laughed their doubt. Then Jimmie Dunn pressed the rod down across his left cheek.

As the flesh crinkled and smoked, a shriek caused Jimmie Dunn to leap to his feet. The white man was staring at him in horror. His body trembled; his lower jaw hung down, and then he screamed again.

Both Tom and Jimmie sprang toward him.

"You'll get the same in a minute if you don't talk!" cried the woodsman fiercely. "Out with it! Quick!"

The man cowered away. They kept after him relentlessly. They threatened and promised, but after the first moment of fright he relapsed into his habitually sullen mood. While they were still working over him, they were startled by a scream from up the river bank and looked around to see Helen running toward them.

"Dont!" she cried. "Stop! Stop!"

"She's seen them coming!" exclaimed Jimmie Dunn as he dropped the rod and sprang to meet her.

"Did you see them?" he called.

Helen did not reply but ran up to them.

"Are they coming?" Jimmie repeated.

"No! No! But I heard! I knew what you were doing, and you must not! You can't!"

She looked at the bound figure of the Indian, and, when she saw the long, red furrow across his cheek, she drew back and covered her face with her hands.

"I was afraid you would!" she sobbed. "I suspected it and came back. And then I heard him scream. Oh, how could you?"

Tom, his nerves raw, exasperated by their failure to make the white man talk, made an impatient gesture.

"That little burn!" he exclaimed. "Think of what Mitchell would do to your brother and the others! Think of what his red devils probably have done before this! Bah! If he doesn't want to get hurt, let him talk. It's up to him."

"Oh!" cried Helen as she dropped her hands and faced Tom. "It isn't that. Don't you see? It isn't what you do to him. It's what you do to yourselves."

The woodsman only stared.

"Don't you see?" she repeated. "It's what you do to yourselves, to your self-respect. You're angry now, excited, anxious. But later! Think of how you will feel when it is all over! You are white men, civilized men, and you'll never forget, never forgive yourselves. You must not do this for Jerry. I can't let you. I won't!"

"There's two others out there besides Jerry," Tom retorted. "There's Marsh Wells and—and Jimmie Lad." His voice trembled, and then he went on fiercely,

"So long as they don't come back; so long as this is the way to help them, I don't care what happens to me or what I think or feel afterwards. I'm going ahead with this, and I'm going to make this man talk if I have to kill him doing it."

Helen drew back. There was something about the fierce determination of the woodsman that told her argument would be useless, and his reminder that Jerry alone was not the only consideration had shown that inadvertently she had robbed herself of the right to protest further. She could only watch, fascinated, while Tom picked up the cleaning-rod and thrust it savagely into the coals.

As the woodsman fanned the flame, they heard a call from the river and wheeled to see a canoe approaching from the opposite shore. They recognized the lone paddler instantly. It was Marshall.

The three waited silently, not even running down to meet him.

"Where's Jimmie Lad?" called Tom when Marshall stepped ashore.

The father did not answer. He strode quickly to them, his face hard, his eyes only on Mitchell's bound figure. When he stopped beside the Indian and saw the red furrow across his cheek, he glanced angrily, not at Tom, but at Jimmie Dunn.

"You let him do that!" he exclaimed.

"No," declared Jimmie. "I didn't let him do it. I did it myself."

Marshall stared at him in horror, and then his gaze traveled unconsciously to Helen.

"Don't include her in that!" Jimmie Dunn exclaimed angrily. "We'd have finished the job by this time if she hadn't stopped us."

"But, Jimmie!" cried Marshall. "How could you forget that you are white, that you——"

"Look here, Marsh Wells!" interrupted Tom fiercely. "That's enough of your righteousness. I won't stand for it. Here we were waiting for you. No word and

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suspecting anything. We ain't a couple of bows and arrows. We don't like to see a man squirm. We're no more bloodthirsty than you are.

"But I want to tell you right here, Marsh, that, when you and the lad don't show up and we know this rotten dog can help, we'll burn or cut him to inches until he talks. If that boy needs me, I'll go to hell and stay there if it helps. Now shut up!"

Marshall did not reply, though it was not Tom's command that brought silence. Tears were in the woodsman's eyes. His voice had trembled when he spoke of Jimmie Lad, and the father suddenly realized that this appalling act was the result of an affection as great as his own and a willingness for sacrifice he himself could not exceed.

"I understand, Tom," he said humbly after a moment. "And I apologize. But there's no need of any more of that. We found the oasis and the Indians, and they are the key to the mystery, all right. Jimmie Lad's out there watching them while I came for you two."

"And Jerry!" cried Helen. "Did you see anything of him—any sign he was there?"

"No, but I think we will," he lied. "It's the strangest bunch of Indians I ever saw, or rather they acted more strangely. And we'll find Jerry soon."

There was an exclamation from his feet, and all looked down to see Mitchell, his lips curled in scorn, vindictive triumph shining in his eyes.

CHAPTER XIV

MITCHELL'S TRIUMPH

"BUT look here, Marsh!" exclaimed Jimmie Dunn when they had walked back to the tent to be out of hearing of the prisoners. "What did you go off and leave the lad for?"

There was an indignant accusation in his voice which received support in the eyes of Tom Gill. Marshall stared at them both for a moment. Then he laughed gently.

"I left him," he said slowly, "because he was the better man of the two. There was a job for each of us, and each chose the one best suited to his abilities."

"But if anything happens to him?" objected Tom.

"Look here," answered Marshall slowly. "The boy's mine, my own flesh and blood. I've shared him with you, and I'm ready to admit that he means no less to you two than he does to me. But he is a man now, and as good a man as any of us was twenty-five years ago. He has all of Jimmie's dash and Tom's caution. And that is the kind of man needed to watch those Indians and to find out where they are keeping Jerry Corwin—learn the reason for their doing all those funny stunts.

"And so, when he sent me back to camp to tell you folks to come on, I didn't insult him by trying to keep him out of a dangerous situation that he was capable of meeting."

After Marshall's explanation the others grinned at each other sheepishly.

"I guess because I taught him to paddle and most everything else he knows," said Tom, "I'm like a she bear with one cub. But I never let him run no chances, never."

"I'm glad that I'm not the only one," laughed Marshall, "who has had to learn that the lad is a man, even if we still call him by his old name. But let me tell you what we found.

"We went straight south, paralleling a small stream that flows into the Thelon three miles below here. It's all prairie south of here, except along that river, but after we'd gone ten miles we saw a dark patch off to the south. When we crossed a small ridge, we saw it was a big stretch of timber, so big we knew right then we had found the oasis. It was proved to us five miles later when we saw smoke, and long before that we saw two Indians out on the prairie.

"We kept out of sight, and the country helped us there. Instead of being a rolling prairie like it is along the river here, it is broken up more, hills and valleys, and the timber is in a country of many small lakes and streams.

"We worked into the timber toward the smoke and came to an opening in the valley. An Indian village was on the far side of it, but we found a hill which permitted us to look right down upon it.

"Something strange was going on there. The women were not busy drying meat. The children weren't running around playing. The men were not lying around camp. In fact, there were few men there. Every little while some came in, but others left,

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and we could see that they were going out toward the prairies to the west and north. We figured that, from the two we had seen out there, they were hunting for some one or something."

"Looking for Mitchell," interrupted Jimmie Dunn excitedly.

"Perhaps, but we couldn't tell, of course. Then, about every half hour, a man would come into camp on the run from the east. Apparently he was a messenger, for every one would gather about him, and there would be much excitement for a moment."

"That will explain what we want to know, all right," declared Tom. "Did you notice if the Indians were armed?"

"Only with bows and arrows. I didn't see a gun among them."

"Bows and arrows at this age!" cried Jimmie Dunn. "It means the oasis Indians. They're the ones Hearne was told about and the ones Mitchell's band was talking of raiding."

"Well, he has, all right," declared Tom grimly. "And what's more, he has worked some of his conjuring stuff on them. I bet that scouting over the plains was to find Mitchell. He worked a trick on them because he can't go straight."

"Look here," said Jimmie Dunn. "We know that Mitchell and his white pal were trying to throw some one off their trail. Their tracks and doubling show that. And we know that the Indians are looking for some one. Well, what do the two mean? And we know enough to be sure, whatever Mitchell's game is, that it is a crooked one. So we'll just defeat it by taking him back and turning him over to the Indians."

It was a proposal worthy of the brilliance and daring of Jimmy Dunn. Tom Gill, who envied Jimmie that very quality more than any one knew, fairly grinned his appreciation. Only Marshall voiced an objection.

"It's a cure-or-kill method," he said slowly. "And, like all that Jimmie suggests, it is either a brilliant scheme or the biggest fool stunt we could pull off. What if we did that and then found that we had taken him to his friends? We would be giving him allies, and you know Mitchell has had twenty-two years in which to let his hate grow. I think we are as much an obsession with him as he is with Tom."

It was a sobering thought. For a moment they were silent. Then Tom came forward with the compromise that usually breached the difference in the opinions of the two.

"Well," he suggested " we don't have to decide absolutely until we've talked the matter over with the lad. He's watched them longer, and he probably knows what's eating the band. And we could try the idea out on the white one. He shows things easier, and maybe, if we tell him what we intend to do, we can find out whether he wants to go or not."

They brought the white men to the tent at once.

"We've decided what to do with you," announced Jimmie Dunn triumphantly. "We're going to take you south, about twenty-five miles, and we're going to turn you over to the band of Indians you've fooled."

The shot told. The man looked frantically from one to the other, seemed about to speak. Then caution overcame his terror, and he relapsed into his customary sullen silence.

"That proves it!" laughed Jimmie Dunn. "He was scared to death at the thought of it. Let's start."

THEY began at once to break camp. Marshall and Jimmie Lad had swung east to the small river and found that it was large enough for canoes much of the distance. Marshall and Jimmie Dunn took Mitchell in their canoe, leaving the white man to Helen and Tom in the other.

Three miles down the Thelon they found the river flowing in from the south and turned up. It was a sluggish stream for several miles, often very shallow, but there was no necessity for portaging until they were fifteen miles from the Thelon. Then the stream became smaller, more swift, and the channel was filled with boulders. At last navigation became impossible.

There was a thick growth of spruce at this point, and in its shelter they cached canoes, camping equipment and part of the dried meat they had found in the prisoner's packs.

"Now we'll go to the place where I left Jimmie Lad," said Marshall.

There were four rifles for the party before the capture of Mitchell and the white man. Now they had six. Helen was given one, and they carried all the ammunition they had. Marshall had suggested that Helen

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be left with the canoes, but she objected so strenuously, and the uncertainty of their enterprise was so great, it was finally decided that she should accompany them.

"It's the safest thing," said Jimmie Dunn. "We don't know what we're going to bump into, but it doesn't seem right to take a woman on such an expedition."

"You are not responsible for my being here," interrupted Helen.

"I know, but that does not alter the case. However, we have plenty of ammunition for the present, and Marsh says there are no more than twenty of these Indians, all armed with bows and arrows."

Marshall led the way along the river, under cover of the timber, until they were near the oasis. Then he turned to the right, into a valley between two ridges, and went on within the oasis itself. After a few miles they began to climb the ridge to the left.

It was bare at the top but covered with many large boulders, and it was among these that Jimmie Lad had been left to watch the Indian village directly beneath. Marshall left the others in the timber and went forward alone to find his son.

A half hour passed, and he did not return. Finally Tom declared his intention of going to look for him. But, before he had gone more than a few yards, they saw Marshall coming. His white face told the news before they were within speaking distance.

"He's gone," Marshall whispered as he came up to them. "He isn't there."

"Maybe he's only trying another place where he can watch better," suggested Tom hopefully.

"There isn't any other place from which he could watch, and the distinct understanding was that he was not to leave that spot. We talked it all over, and he knew that it would take me about two days to get back here. We were to come directly to his hiding-place, and he said he would be there."

The three men stood looking at each other in silence, while fear etched haggard lines in each face. Helen walked slowly away. In the blow that had fallen she knew that she could offer no comfort.

Neither could she look upon their suffering. It was upon her errand that Jimmie Lad had gone. She wondered dully why they did not upbraid her. She would have been glad if they had. At least it would have been something else to think about, something to ease the dull ache in her heart.

It had seemed to Helen that in the disappearance of her brother, in her dread of the outcome of this terrible mystery, in the sinister threat of Mitchell's triumphant sneers, she had borne all she could. But now she knew that there was a greater pain that could come to her. As she thought of Jimmie Lad, of his gentle services when she was helpless, of his wholehearted espousal of her cause, of the comradeship and understanding that had grown up between them as they traveled together through the North country, it seemed unbelievable that he had come into her life only to leave it.

She stood there, battling for her self-control, trying not to give way to her despair and bitter self-accusation. A hand on her shoulder caused her to look up. Marshall Wells was bending over her.

"Be brave," he whispered. "It is hard on us all, but we are not giving up. We'll get them both. The shock got us for a minute, but we're going to win. We still have a card to play. We'll trade Mitchell and the other for our boys."

CHAPTER XV

THE CONJURER

HAD Jimmie Lad been an Indian, his father would have found him exactly where he had left him. The red man hasn't outgrown the days when, without firearms, he was accustomed to wait indefinitely beside a game trail for the only chance possible with his short-range bow and arrow.

The Indian must not be given entire credit for his patience, however. The inactivity appeals to him, and he would have considered Jimmie Lad's task a sinecure. He would have munched some dried meat, dozed occasionally, but he would have remained. It would have been the easiest thing to do.

Jimmie Lad was a white man, and a young one. A day tried his patience sorely. He dozed often, kept a careful watch upon the Indian village directly beneath him through a peep-hole in the fringe of low shrubs, grumbled because he could not smoke, and all the while his imagination was working overtime.

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Perhaps that is one of the chief differences between the white man and the red. The Indian is seldom troubled by his thoughts. They do not irritate or stimulate, unless they are centered on a grievance, and even then he would rather sit still and sulk.

Jimmie Lad could not remain inactive. In his abundant leisure he thought of many matters, rehearsed all the strange things which had happened since he had entered the Barren Grounds, speculated upon the mystery of the white man with the drooping face and his disfigurement and considered often the possible fate or whereabouts of Jerry Corwin.

But most of all he was irritated, or tantalized, by the actions of the Indians beneath him. Every twenty or thirty minutes one rushed off toward the east and another returned, to be surrounded immediately by every one in the village.

In the messenger's absence the men went into a large, circular building made of logs set upright in the ground. It was windowless, and there was a large hole in the center of the roof through which smoke poured. Evidently it was a meeting-place for the hunters, a council-house, and around it the interest of the entire village centered all the time that Jimmie Lad watched. He dozed, but the Indians did not seem to sleep. They were in a state of sustained excitement and seemed frenzied in their desire for news from the messengers.

Jimmie Lad soon learned to distinguish between the twenty or more men, and, by taking the intervals between the departure of one and the return of the next, he concluded that the object of this absorbing interest must be about two miles to the east.

Quite naturally he became more and more obsessed with a desire to get at the bottom of this mysterious action. Because Jerry Corwin was not in sight, he connected him with the affair, and his imagination produced any number of situations, chief of which was that Jerry was held prisoner at some other spot in the oasis and was being tortured or slowly starved to death. The messengers, of course, were reporting on his condition.

Jimmie Lad recognized weaknesses in this theory, chief of which was the fact that Indians would never deny themselves the pleasure of watching the anguish of another. But, and he was firm in this belief, something was going on of which he should know. As he reckoned the distance he had come from the Thelon with his father and the time required for the bringing up of the entire party, he saw that he would have several hours in which to investigate the mystery which, as he expressed it, "was getting his goat."

"It wouldn't do any harm," he arranged his defense. "I'll be back here when dad comes, and, besides, I may learn something about Corwin. There's no danger. I can sneak through this spruce anywhere without being seen, and these Indians have quit watching the prairies or anything except those messengers."

The more Jimmie Lad thought of it the more he wanted to go. And finally he went. He slipped back along the ridge, down among the boulders into the spruce, and then he struck straight east.

He did not hurry. Occasionally, to make sure of his course, he would work south, hide in a thicket and watch for the regular trips of the Indians to and from the camp. In this way he kept on toward the east, always in thick timber, for nearly two miles. More time than he had planned upon was consumed in his careful progress and long watches, but he forgot this when at last he came to the top of a low ridge and found himself above a little valley not more than a hundred yards across.

Hills surrounded it on all sides, except for a narrow opening toward the east. But, while the hillsides were thickly covered with spruce, the floor of the valley was free of any growth except the luxuriant Barren Grounds grass and thousands of flowers.

It was really a beautiful sight, one that would never be imagined in the treeless waste that covers the north end of the continent. But Jimmie Lad's eyes failed to find the beauty. For beneath him, hurrying across the open, was an Indian. In the center another Indian sat upon the ground. Thirty yards in front of this man was the gleaming white triangle of a canvas tent, standing out in vivid contrast to the spruce thicket beside which it was pitched.

In the excitement of his discovery it was all that Jimmie Lad could do to restrain himself from rushing forward. A white man's canvas tent among these oasis

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Indians, who possessed no firearms, who showed no evidences of contact with white traders, aroused at once the belief that Jerry Corwin's trail was becoming fresh. Then he remembered the man with the drooping face—knew that he, too, must have had a tent.

The Indian on the ground in the center of the opening gave his place to the newcomer, spoke a few words and then started toward the village. The new guard did not attempt to go near the tent. He took the seat the other had vacated, but not as if he expected a long, tiresome watch. There was an air of suppressed eagerness about him, and he never looked away from the tent.

While Jimmie Lad waited, debating what to do, the tent began to sway. The sides bulged out, and he caught the sound of a stick beating against the canvas sides and also the murmur of a chant.

"A conjurer's tent!" he exclaimed under his breath. "And these messengers are to carry the first word of results from the medicine-man's efforts. That's what the village is waiting for."

The significance of the tent impressed Jimmie Lad immediately with the seriousness of the problem which confronted him. He knew how great a part conjury plays in the lives of the Indians of the North country. Except hunger, there is no factor more powerful. The fear of conjury; the complete acceptance of the belief that even the lowliest among them can bring a curse upon another; the respect for the medicine-man, who, if he be clever, can wield an influence far greater than that of any charlatan of civilized lands—all have combined to form a current which governs their daily lives.

Moreover, Jimmie Lad felt certain that the tent and the magic now being attempted had something to do with Jerry Corwin and probably with the disappearance of George Mitchell and his white companion. The tent was a white man's. The oasis Indians did not trade with any fur-posts. He saw, too, that there was but slight possibility that the tent belonged either to Mitchell or his companion. They showed evidences of having been with the Indians for a long time, while the tent was not very old.

But, whether Jerry Corwin was in the tent, a victim of the medicine-man, or whether George Mitchell had caused his death before his flight, he could not know. He did feel certain, however, that the tent and its occupant might do much to unravel the mystery.

He glanced at his watch and found that he must hurry if he were to be back before the possibility of his father's return. The position of the tent gave him a covered approach, for it was pitched so close to the forest the brush touched the rear side of it. He had only to make a circuit of the valley, enter through the wooded draw to the east and come up to the rear of the tent without being seen by the Indian out in the open.

He slipped back to the other side of the ridge and, at a run, circled at its base until he came to the draw. Then, crawling on his hands and knees, noiselessly and patiently, he went forward until the tent was directly in front of him. He peered through the brush until he had determined the position of the Indian watcher and then moved over until the tent was between them.

THEN, as he waited, a voice in the tent began a singsong chant.

"Two times one is two. Two times two is four. Two times three is six. Two times four is eight," and so on to the end of the multiplication table, when it broke off with the remark: "Oh, ——! What'll I do next?"

Jimmie Lad's growing fear that the man who chanted was insane—he knew he was a white man—was dissipated by the question. Evidently the man was not at a loss, however, for suddenly he began to beat the sides of the tent with a stick, accompanying his action with the words:

"Little Jack Horner
Sat in the corner
Eating his Christmas pie.
He put in his thumb
And pulled out a plum
And said, 'What a great little boy am I.'"

Jimmie Lad heard a low voice out in the clearing and knew that the Indians were changing watch. Immediately he began to crawl toward the tent. He lifted the flap at the rear and thrust his head inside.

Lying on his back, he looked up to see a young man halt in the midst of a recital of the exciting adventures of *Little Bo Peep* and stare at him open-mouthed.

"Don't quit!" whispered Jimmie Lad.

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"Oh, I won't quit," the man continued in a singsong. "I can't quit now. I've been going steadily for three days and most of three nights, and I have the habit. But who in the name of the slink-eyed little devil who stole Gabriel's horn are you, and what are you doing here?"

"My name is Wells, and I came to get you out, if I can."

"I never was so glad to meet any one in my life, Wells. Come in out of the cold. Those nitchies never look inside, and they won't suspect you are here. And they might see you out there and become suspicious."

Jimmie Lad hitched himself forward, and his head struck a block of wood.

"Be careful of my pets," sang the man. "Of course, you know my name is Corwin, or you wouldn't be here. But don't injure Georgie and Dave. I think a lot of them. Handsome devils, aren't they?" he concluded as Jimmie Lad turned around, sat up and stared at the "pets."

"You recognize them?" demanded Corwin excitedly and forgetting to sing the question.

There was no need for Jimmie to answer. His expression was enough.

Nor could there be any doubt about the "pets." They were two blocks of wood, each carved to represent a man's head. The work was crudely done, but the likenesses were unmistakable. On one the features were normal, but the top of the head was uneven, one side bulging higher than the other. In the second the right eye sagged grotesquely, and tacked to the lower part of the face was a thick fringe of the body-hair of a musk-ox.

"Mr. George Mitchell, medicine-man," sang Corwin as he tapped the uneven skull with his stick. "The other is Mr. David Mason."

"But what do they mean?" whispered Jimmie Lad.

"They themselves don't mean much. It's what they stand for. I made them. My medicine is so strong that I can do anything. I did not like Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Mason, and so I conjured them into these wooden images. Now, to save my skin from the vengeance of the Indians, I've been given the task of conjuring them back to their normal selves. That's the reason for the mathematics, nursery-rhymes and the music. They're supposed to do the work, though I was beginning to think they would fail. Now I have hopes."

Jimmie Lad did not understand and he was a little vexed.

"You'll have to pardon what appears to be persiflage, old chap," Corwin continued, "for I'll defy any man to be serious or get over a sensible idea when he has to sing it. But I'll do my best. I suppose old Allardyce sent you after me."

"Never heard of him."

"Well, it would have surprized me if he had sent any one. You've heard of Mason, though?"

Jimmie Lad shook his head.

"Say!" and Corwin did not have to sing. "I don't get this at all. Have you been in the Barren Grounds all your life?"

"No. I came up this Spring and found Helen—that is, Miss Corwin——"

Jerry had stopped beating the sides of the tent with his stick and was staring at Jimmie Lad.

"Helen!" he whispered. "Did you say Helen? Where did you see her?"

"On the upper Thelon. She was hunting for you. We found her, lost, and brought her with us. She's over on the Thelon now."

"Do you mean that?" Jerry demanded incredulously, and he gripped Jimmie Lad's shoulder and shook him. "Did she come up here looking for me? That girl? Wells, she's—she's——"

He choked and stopped speaking. Then he suddenly began to sing again—

"How many of you are there?"

"Four."

"Maybe we can do it. But how did you happen to know Mitchell and Mason's images?"

"We found them north of the Thelon and made them prisoners. They're over on the Thelon or coming this way, too."

"Wait," and Jerry slipped out of the front of the tent. Jimmie Lad heard him speaking to the Indian outside. After a moment he returned.

"Now we can talk sensibly," he said in a natural voice. "I told the gink out there that my prize spirit had come to the tent to talk the matter over with me and that I'd have to cease conjuring for a time while I listened to him and argued out several matters. I also told him there was a good chance of my succeeding. So speak up

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and don't be afraid. They'll think it's my spirit talking. But, first of all, can you bring Mason and Mitchell here, to this tent, or near it?"

"I don't see why not."

"Then listen," and Jerry's eyes lighted. "These Indians think I have turned those two scoundrels into these wooden blocks. They've told me I've got to turn them back or suffer the consequences. Now I'll just do that very thing, with the help of you, my good spirit, of course. We're going to give George and Dave the surprize of their lives."

CHAPTER XVI

DAVID MASON

JIMMIE LAD'S eyes shone at the thought of turning the tables so neatly upon Mitchell and leaving him and his companion to take the place of the two carved images. He had known all along that the wily medicine-man and the man with the drooping face were fleeing from some one. Now the idea of accomplishing Jerry Corwin's release and punishing the others at the same time was a most appealing bit of humor.

As his father had said, however, Jimmie Lad mingled the dash of Jimmie Dunn with the caution of Tom Gill. The days spent with Helen, watching her drawn face, knowing what she had suffered in the attempt to rescue her brother, also had a sobering effect. He could appreciate the humor and the daring that actuated the galvanic young man he had found in the conjuror's tent, but he wished to be certain of its wisdom.

When there was time, when swift, impulsive action was not necessary, Jimmie Lad believed in being certain. He grasped the entire situation, too, and he knew all the things which must be done.

"Look here," he said. "If I got into this tent without their suspecting it, why can't you get out? What's the use of taking any more chances than is necessary? If it was you and I alone here, it would be different. But there's your sister and my father and Uncle Jimmie and Tom Gill. All the other men are past fifty and, while they are ready for anything, they can't do too much. And we're a long way from anywhere, and we haven't a whole lot of ammunition. Tell that fellow out there you're going into a trance, and we'll both slip out the back of the tent and get away."

"It won't do," Jerry answered. "To make you understand, I'll have to begin at the beginning. Then you'll see.

"Helen probably told you that old Allardyce sent me up here to look into the possibilities of a railroad between the east end of Great Slave Lake and the head of Chesterfield Inlet. He has some wild scheme of making this a Summer resort country, with transportation by water from Athabasca Landing down the Athabasca and Slave Rivers and across Great Lake by steamer, and then a railroad connecting with salt water at the inlet.

"Of course, any one who has ever been in this country knows no tourist will ever come up here. But I went through with it anyhow. Down the Thelon, not far from here, I was back from the river hunting caribou last Summer when who should I run into but David Mason. You don't know who he is, do you?"

"Uncle Jimmie said he had seen him but couldn't remember where," answered Jimmie Lad. "And your sister said there was something familiar about him. I saw him when he had shaved and before Mitchell had slashed his face. It was a face no one would ever forget."

"It certainly was, and he really stood for Mitchell marring him, did he? I never thought he'd have the nerve. Well, when I ran into him, I knew him at once. He was shaved, and, though I'd never seen him, I'd seen his picture many times and, like a fool, of course, I called him by name.

"That's where my troubles began. Mitchell was with him, and they simply took me in, and my two men, too. One of the men—both were Iroquois from eastern Canada—put up a fight, and they killed him. The other is in the Indian village now. We've framed up a getaway several times, but we've always been caught. Of course, I knew why Mason and Mitchell kept me, but I didn't understand why they didn't put me out of the way. With me loose Mason's career would be ended. But you don't know who Mason is, eh?

"David Mason was an officer in a Montreal Trust Company. Five years ago he disappeared, and with him went more than a million of funds belonging mostly to

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widows and orphans. It was a big steal, and the papers were full of it. Mason would be known anywhere, for his picture was printed all over the world, and no one could mistake that face. That's why he was familiar to Helen and Mr. Dunn.

"But no one ever got a trace of him. The authorities searched the world, but they failed to find a single person who had seen him. How he did it, I don't know. But that's the man I found up here in the Barren Grounds, living in this oasis with a band of Indians who had never seen white men; who had only a legend of the white race; who are undoubtedly the oasis Indians of whom Hearne wrote, and who were completely in the power of this man, Mitchell. Mitchell is ——"

"Go on with the rest," interrupted Jimmie Lad eagerly. "I know all about Mitchell He and his Indians held Uncle Jimmie prisoner for two years, and Tom Gill thought he had killed him. He broke his head with the butt of his rifle and left him for dead."

"Jimmie Dunn!" cried Jerry. "I've heard of that. Mitchell was left for dead by his own men, and some of these Indians found him and brought him here. He got well. He tried his tricks here, and now he owns these people. How he got hold of Mason, I don't know. Mason probably headed for this country because he had heard no one lived in it and fell in with Mitchell somehow. Anyhow, to make it short, here's what happened. Mason offered Mitchell a chance to make a bunch of money. He had cached his million or more, and Mitchell was to get a share of it for taking care of him here and getting him out. Listening, snooping, deducing and piecing together, I got hold of their entire scheme.

"Mitchell, you know, is a smooth one. He boasts that he never raised his hand against a man in his life. He lets others do the killing. He knew I would spoil his scheme to get part of Mason's loot and give Mason away. I couldn't live. But George wouldn't kill me, and Mason didn't have the nerve. I'm getting too far ahead. When Mitchell introduced Mason to these Indians five years ago, he told them he was a god of some sort. It was easy to make them believe it. They had never seen a white man. For a hundred years they had not seen any other Indians. They had never heard of firearms. Think of it! In this day and age and on the American continent!

"They really are an exceptional lot, for Chippewyans. They have a big patch of timber here that gives them shelter and fuel. The caribou pass several times a year. Big herds. There are lots of fish in the lakes and rivers. Hearne's information was correct, in so far as their being as provident as the Eskimos. They never have starvation times, for they always dry and store plenty of meat. Having gone so long without contact with other Indians, they have lost any warlike tendency they may have had. Really, Wells, they're quite a decent lot, despite Mitchell's influence. Simple and kindly but even more superstitious than the usual Indian of today.

"Well, Mitchell made them believe Mason was a god of some sort. As I said, it was easy. He had binoculars and two rifles and ammunition, and he used them only occasionally, whenever Mitchell thought there might be a backslider or two. They got so they worshiped that Montreal crook and believed all their happiness and prosperity were due to him.

"YOU can begin to see where I come in. Mason and Mitchell wanted to get out and enjoy the trust company loot. They knew they would need a water-tight excuse to get away from these people; so Mitchell made me the excuse. He began to tell the Indians that, while I was a white man, I was an evil one and seeking to injure their own white god. Finally, when the time came a week ago, he said that I had conjured him and Mason and that they would turn into blocks of wood unless I unconjured them within ten days. And, if I didn't do it, famine would wipe out the band.

"It was a great scheme, all right. Mitchell and Mason slipped out during a storm, and the next morning the Indians found these 'pets' in their tent. They would have killed me right then if they hadn't believed that I alone could change these images back to flesh and blood.

"I knew that Mitchell and Mason would head north for the Thelon, and I told the Indians I could not reconjure them unless I knew which way their spirits had gone.

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I said their spirits would leave tracks. My idea was, of course, that they might run into the two. They hunted, but they didn't find a trail and quit yesterday.

"Three days ago I said I was ready to begin. I had this tent, my own, set up here. Went through a lot of mystery business selecting the site, but the real idea was a place from which I could get away to the northeast and find some Eskimos. I also said I had to be alone, but they insisted on one man to watch me."

"Why didn't you start before?" interrupted Jimmie Lad. "They'll be getting suspicious."

"Can you imagine a better set of prison-bars than several hundred miles of these Barren Grounds, provided a man had no weapons or equipment of any kind?" demanded Jerry. "I'm as safe here as I would be in a vault in the Bank of England, and the Indians know it. And, if I stop this conjuring, stop making a racket in this tent, they get suspicious. When I sleep—they think I'm in some sort of a trance—I have to stick my legs outside so they can see them.

"I'm safe for two or three days more anyhow. I told them it would take all of the ten days to do the conjuring trick. In the meantime my other canoeman is to get hold of something or other and light out. As a last chance I'm to make a break and find him down the Thelon if I can. Stuff my leggings and moccasins full of brush and stick them out of the tent door. That would be good for a few hours, but I haven't had the signal from Louis."

Jimmie Lad did not comment. He knew only too well what a risk Corwin ran; how slight the possibilities were that he and his canoeman could reach a camp of wandering Eskimos farther down the Thelon before he was overtaken, either by the oasis Indians or by starvation. If the canoeman got away with a little food, there would be a chance. Otherwise, it was death.

"Couldn't you explain what Mitchell and Mason are?" he asked.

"Explain! How? The Indians know nothing of the outside world. I couldn't make them understand that Mason is a crook and Mitchell a bigger one. They believe implicitly that Mason is a god of some sort and that, if he goes, they will die of starvation. Mitchell has pounded that into them too hard, and I haven't a thing to work on. But tell me about Helen and how you happened to find her and why you captured Mitchell and Mason."

Jimmie Lad related briefly the story of his journey down the Thelon. When he finished, Jerry Corwin did not speak for a moment. He did not try to hide the tears in his eyes.

"What a girl!" he exclaimed at last. "And if anything had happened to her!"

His face hardened.

"I'm going to kill Mitchell yet!" he declared. "He would have been responsible. I don't mind what he tried to do to me. That's all part of the game, even if he knew he was leaving me to a certain death. But what he did brought her up here, and—and Mitchell is going to die. Only we're not helping things any by chinning like this," he continued in his old manner. "Now, I'll keep things going here. I'll tell the Indians I'm getting close. You sneak out, get in touch with the others of your party and decide what to do. I'll be ready for anything."

"It won't be long," said Jimmie Lad. "Father was to bring them all, Mitchell and Mason, too. I'll have to hurry, for I'm late now. You go out and talk to that Indian while I get away."

Jerry held out his hand, and Jimmie Lad grasped it.

"As I said, I never was so glad to see any one in my life, Wells," Jerry whispered. "And tell Helen I'm well and all right and I'll see her soon. Good luck."

He slipped out of the tent and walked across the opening to the Indian. When Jimmie Lad heard him speaking, he crawled out at the rear, slipped away through the brush and, when he was safe, rose to his feet and ran swiftly but silently around the ridge toward the village.

He swung to the north to be certain that he did not encounter any one and in half an hour was at the foot of the ridge which overlooked the Indian village. He did not see any one and crept up the hillside under cover of the big boulders and then along the crest to his sentry-place.

As he neared it, he saw that no one was there, and he chuckled when he thought of the surprize he would have for his father when he returned.

Carefully he crept into his old hiding-place, for he was so close to the village he

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might be heard. Suddenly yells of men and shrieks of women arose from the valley beneath. He squirmed forward quickly and looked through his peep-hole to learn the cause.

Beneath him he saw his father, Jimmie Dunn, Tom Gill and Helen surrounding Mitchell and Mason. All about them, shouting and shrieking, were the oasis Indians.

The men had spears and clubs and there was no mistaking their intention. They were bent upon releasing their white god and their medicine-man.

CHAPTER XVII

THE WHITE MAN'S DUTY

BEFORE the Indians had recovered from their surprize upon seeing the strangers, Marshall Wells and his companions had taken their prisoners across the opening and up to the edge of the village. They had been confident that, because Mason feared going back, the Indians would be overjoyed to have the white man and Mitchell again in their power.

But the reception was entirely different from what they had planned upon. As Jimmie Lad stared down upon them, Mitchell suddenly issued a command in Chippewyan. Jimmie Lad knew enough of the language to catch his meaning. It had been—

"Capture these men."

Instantly the Indians charged. Marshall Wells looked around and saw the open door of the council-house behind him.

"Inside!" he cried. "Bring the prisoners inside!"

He sprang to Mason's side and started to pull him backward. Jimmie Dunn grasped Mitchell and did the same. Tom Gill, his rifle clubbed, for the Indians were too close for him to fire, stood his ground to cover the retreat. Helen, engulfed in the rush, had only time to spring backward and gain the door of the building.

Had there been room in which to fire a rifle, the result might have been different. But the twenty hunters swept forward so swiftly that Jimmie Dunn and Marshall Wells could not even strike back and still retain a hold upon their prisoners. Mitchell broke away; then Mason.

Marshall and Jimmie Dunn attempted to beat back the Indians, whose hands were already clutching at their clothing. Jimmie Dunn protected Helen as she gained the door of the council-house, but Marshall, beset on three sides, went down from the blow of a club on the side of his head.

Jimmie Dunn, infuriated, whirled his rifle and cleared the space over his old comrade's body.

"Come back!" called Helen behind him, and he caught a glimpse of her dragging Marshall from between his legs and into the door.

The Indians pressed forward in a fresh rush, and he retreated inside. Helen swung the heavy door shut in the faces of the attackers, but not before Jimmie Dunn had seen Tom Gill, surrounded on all sides, go down beneath a mass of skin-clad bodies.

All this had happened between the instant Jimmie Lad had looked through his peep-hole, comprehended what it meant and had risen to his feet. As he stood up, he saw Tom go down. Then the Indians arose, lifted him to his feet and, at Mitchell's direction, carried him to the trunk of a dead tree that stood near the center of the clearing.

Whatever caution Jerry Corwin may have ascribed to the medicine-man, there was none of it now. Mitchell was beside himself with fury. As the Indians bound Tom to the tree, he stood before the white man, struck him in the face, spat upon him, shouted his hatred.

Here was the man who had crushed his skull so many years before, now unexpectedly in his power. The accumulated hatred of nearly a quarter of a century seethed in Mitchell's brain. Tom glared back, and the Indian's fury was boundless.

Jimmie Lad knew that his father, perhaps only his father's body, and Helen and Jimmie Dunn were safe for the moment inside the council-house. The Indians were beginning to leave it and join those who surrounded Tom.

Jimmie Lad saw only the danger to the old woodsman, and with one stride he was over the brow of the hill. Slipping, leaping, sometimes almost flying in his rapid descent, he was at the bottom in a few seconds and, with the impetus gained, was speeding across the fifty yards of open ground that lay between him and the tree to which Tom was tied.

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He had only one thought, that he must save Tom. He did not consider how he might best do it. He did not think for an instant that he alone would face twenty Indians. He was possessed of a blind, unreasoning fury. The old woodsman who had been his companion since childhood, whose gruff but lovable personality had made him the idol of the boy, the beloved comrade of the young man, was in Mitchell's power. That was all.

The rifle became only a club. A primitive fury took no heed of anything in the face of its sole purpose.

His sudden rush had not been seen by the Indians until he had reached the bottom of the hill. They turned to look, all except Mitchell, who was still dancing in fury before Tom.

And then, before the astonished natives could act, Jimmie Lad was among them. His rifle was a flail. He whirled it, slashed with it, jabbed. He took no heed of defense, sprang from one side of the group he had split to the other.

He swore frenziedly, grunted when the rifle-butt crush against a bone and finally worked forward until, his back to Tom, he faced George Mitchell.

His rifle was swung upward for the blow that would end the medicine-man, when an Indian, the first of his fellows to recover, darted in and seized it. Jimmie Lad felt it wrenched from his grasp, but he only sprang forward bare-handed and carried Mitchell to the ground, while his hands groped for the medicine-man's throat.

As the two went down, the Indians surged forward. They had recovered from their surprize. But, as the quickest reached out to grasp Jimmie Lad's hair, a rifle cracked behind them.

Instantly every Indian drew back. It was a sound they knew well, but always it had come as the manifestation of the marvelous power of their white god. On the rare occasions when it had spoken, the entire village had been present, and always, without fail, a caribou had dropped dead.

Now it was one of their own number that tumbled forward, and they saw Mason fleeing for the shelter of the forest.

The rifle cracked a second time. An Indian grasped his arm in surprize, then dashed away in terror.

Again the rifle cracked from the door of the council-house. A third Indian sank to the ground. Another dashed away after the man with the wounded arm. Then all turned and fled across the clearing.

Unmindful of the flight, not even hearing the shots, the two men on the ground continued to roll about in a terrific struggle. First one, then the other, was on top. Hands darted out for a throat, an eye, the hair. Each was rage-maddened, unthinking, unconscious of everything except the desire to kill. There was no fear of death, only a wish to slay, and so furiously did each strive to attain his object that Jimmie Dunn, who had dashed up from the council-house after routing the Indians, could find no opening to aid Jimmie Lad.

"Cut me loose!" cried Tom frantically. "I'll get him. He'll gouge an eye out for the lad."

Jimmie Dunn slashed his bonds, and instantly the old woodsman threw himself upon the swiftly rolling bodies. For a moment his weight held them still, and in that moment he grasped Mitchell's throat.

"Pull the lad off," he panted, and Jimmie Dunn took hold of Jimmie Lad's shoulders and wrenched him loose.

"Quiet!" he commanded as the young man strove to break away. "Keep your head! We've got him now!"

He bent down to help Tom, and in a moment they had Mitchell bound.

"Quick, now!" cried Jimmie Dunn. "Get Mitchell to his feet, Tom! Pick up your rifle, lad! We've got to get fixed up in the council-house before those fellows get over their scare and come back."

HE DARTED off to the skin tents and searched among them. With his first shot the women and children had fled to the forest, and the village was empty. He soon emerged with a bag of dried meat and ran to the council-house.

"How's Marsh?" he asked of Helen as he entered.

"He is still unconscious, but I don't think he is badly hurt," she answered.

Jimmie Lad and Tom were binding Mitchell securely.

"Get into the tents and rustle some meat!" commanded Jimmie Dunn. "I saw a birch-bark basket in the first. Fill it with water. We may have to stand a siege here. I'll keep watch."

Tom and Jimmie Lad, their faces bloody, their clothing torn, ran out in quick

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obedience. They worked rapidly and in ten minutes had gathered meat, fire-wood and two large baskets of water from a near-by creek.

Helen bathed Marshall's face as the others bent over her anxiously, and almost immediately he opened his eyes.

"Jimmie Lad!" he cried as he saw his son. "Safe! The others, too?"

"Every one," answered his son. "All except——"

He stopped. For the first time he had thought of Jerry Corwin.

His father looked about wonderingly, for Jimmie Dunn was smiling at him from the door, and Tom and Helen were bending over him.

"It's Jerry Corwin!" exclaimed Jimmie Lad. "I found him two miles east of here."

"Jerry!" cried Helen, and then fear choked her.

"Oh, he's all right," said Jimmie Lad quickly. "He was a little while ago, but——"

He jumped to his feet and started toward the door.

"What's the matter?" demanded Tom.

"Those Indians! If they go down there! Don't you see?"

"Here, start at the beginning," commanded Jimmie Dunn. "What's happened? Then we'll know what to do."

Jimmie Lad told quickly of his discovery of the tent and Jerry and of his return to the ridge just in time to see the Indians' attack.

"We've got to get down there quick," he concluded. "The Indians will think he started all this, and he won't last a minute."

"Now wait," answered Jimmie Dunn. "Marsh can't move. We've already exposed Miss Corwin to more danger than I like. If things hadn't broken exactly as they did, she would be in Mitchell's hands now.

"There are only three of us able to do anything. If we split, it means two in one party and the third alone. We can't take Marsh, and that means we've got to split."

"Don't think about me!" begged Helen. "If Jerry is down there; if he's so close, we can't——"

She stopped, suddenly aware of what she was asking, of the demands upon the generosity and courage of the four men who had already risked so much for her.

"Jerry! Jerry!" she sobbed, and she flung herself upon the ground.

For an instant the men stared. Then Jimmie Lad sprang toward the door. Jimmie Dunn reached out and stopped him.

"Keep your head!" he shouted. "One man can't do anything."

"But——"

"Listen. Those Indians may not act right away. They haven't Mitchell to direct them. And they're pretty well frightened."

"But they're going to take their revenge on Jerry!" protested Jimmie Lad. "They think he conjured Mitchell and Mason into blocks of wood, and now they'll think he brought us here. I can do this alone. I know the way, and I can get there without being seen. And, if I do meet the Indians, I can beat them with a rifle. They don't know anything about firearms except what Mitchell and Mason have shown them, and they think there's some big medicine in a rifle. One shot will send them scampering."

"He's right there," interrupted Tom Gill. "You drove off the bunch of them alone, Jimmie Dunn."

"Then," was the answer, "you stay here, Tom, and the lad and I will go."

Jimmie Lad sprang to the door with a shout of joy. As he started across the clearing, he was halted by a yell from the top of the ridge, from the spot where he and his father had watched the Indian village.

Silhouetted against the sky and waving his arms was Jerry Corwin.

"Come down!" cried Jimmie. "It's all right. We're all here."

He did not wait to watch but dashed back to the council-house.

"He's here! He's safe!" he cried as he ran up to Helen. "Come out and see. He's on the hill."

Tom Gill and Jimmie Dunn had followed Jimmie Lad outside, and, when Helen left her patient alone, Marshall arose, despite his weakness and dizziness, and staggered to the door.

Leaping down the hillside he saw the object of their search. Flying across the open to meet him was Helen. She seemed hardly to touch the earth as she ran, and in a moment she was in her brother's arms.

The men at the council-house did not go forward. Some of them turned away, and none had dry eyes. Until that day they had never seen Jerry Corwin, but they knew Helen, and, when at last, hand in

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hand, brother and sister came up to them, their greetings were as effusive as if he had been an old friend.

In fact, there was a touch of Helen's hysteria in the manner of each. Only Jerry seemed composed. He shook hands silently, his lips tightly compressed. But his eyes were smiling through frank tears.

The tension was broken when Jimmie Lad demanded—

"How did you get up there on the hill?"

"I heard the shooting and knew that you people had started something. The Indian who was watching the tent at the time turned and ran. I simply followed and circled around to the ridge. There wasn't any one in sight when I first looked down, and I couldn't imagine what had happened. Then you ran out of the council-house."

"Well, you're here anyhow!" Jimmie Lad cried excitedly. "And now there's nothing to prevent our starting out right away, all of us together."

"Let's go quick, before they get over their scare," said Tom.

"No," said Marshall slowly. "We can't do that. We can't go without Mason. I remember his crime. It ruined many people. We're the only white men within hundreds of miles. There is no law here—none except what we bring. We must get Mason and take him out."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE GIVING

MARSHALL'S declaration was received in silence. Every one looked at him, and, when they did not speak, he continued:

"I know we are not Canadians but from the States. Technically, perhaps, it is not our affair. But, under the circumstances, I feel that we are bound by moral obligations to catch this man and take him out to the authorities."

"Can't we tell the Northwest Mounted where he is?" suggested Tom Gill.

"And we haven't time to hang around here and fight a gang of Indians," added Jimmie Lad quietly. "We've got our hands full now in getting out. Besides, those Indians will fight for him; won't they, Jerry?"

"Just now they would," was the answer.

"Lord, Marsh!" exclaimed Jimmie Dunn. "You're carrying that a little too far. If we were five men, we might risk it. But we'd be taking too many chances now, and I, for one, am against anything that places Helen in danger. We've done too much of that sort of thing as it is."

Marshall saw that his three companions were against him, but he would not alter his stand.

"I don't believe," he said, "that our situation excuses us. That man robbed innocent, unsuspecting people. Corwin says he has cached the greater part of his loot. We can save the happiness of a great many as well as perform our duty if we take this man now."

"Mr. Wells is right," said Jerry Corwin quietly. "And there is another argument in favor of taking Mason now."

"What is that?" asked Jimmie Dunn curiously.

"It's this. You have heard of these oasis Indians—were looking for them before you found Helen. I have lived with them now for a year, and I, for one, believe it would be a crime to go away and leave them as they are now: frightened, some of them injured, all believing in these two fakers. You older men undoubtedly know the Chippewyan Indians, how undependable and lazy they are. These oasis Indians are Chippewyans, but for nobody knows how long they have lived here by themselves. For a hundred years they have not seen other Indians. They are truly primitive.

"The situation of this oasis is such that it has been necessary for them to store food, something no other Indian in the North country ever does. In the Winter the caribou are gone. There are a few musk-ox, but they are uncertain. Fishing is difficult in Winter. Consequently these people have learned to lay in their food supply. They are provident. They are gentle because of their isolation. I have been a prisoner among them for a year. They would have killed me if I had not turned those blocks of wood into Mason and Mitchell. And yet I like them. I admire them after a fashion. They have been happy and contented for generations. Until Mitchell came, they did not even have the possibility for evil, I believe.

"I would like to go away and think of them as living here as they have always lived. White men are never coming into

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this country. There is nothing to come for. These people can continue to be unmolested, can continue their peaceful, harmless lives. I think we have a duty here, too. Mitchell was part white man. As white men perhaps it is our duty to undo the wrong he has done them. There is yet another thing. My canoeman, an Iroquois from eastern Canada, is in the oasis somewhere. He has been a prisoner with me, and I won't go without him."

Jimmie Lad stared at the speaker in wonder. This was not the humorous, almost flippant young man he had found in the conjuror's tent. He had spoken with real eloquence, with much feeling and, as the others' expressions indicated, with success.

"How would you go about it?" asked Jimmie Dunn—and his question was intended as a sign of acquiescence, not as an objection.

"I saw one of the wounded Indians dragging himself away when I was on top of the hill. He is the chief of the band. He can't be far. He is a mighty sensible man, and I have seen evidences more than once that he did not entirely approve of Mitchell. We can get him, take care of him, show him that we do not intend any harm to him or the others and explain exactly all that has happened."

"You know what an Indian's belief in conjury is," interrupted Marshall Wells.

"I do. I was a victim of it. But at the same time I feel certain that we can succeed here. We can show them that rifles are not supernatural. We'll even give them one and some ammunition. With what we got from Mitchell's pack, we could spare some. Mason's telescope fooled them. That and the rifle were the only tricks he had, except a watch. We'll let them look through your binoculars. The old chief is a clever man, and he's level-headed. He'll see."

"And," cried Jimmie Lad excitedly, "we'll get those two images and bring them up here. Then they'll see that Mason and Mitchell were never converted into wooden blocks."

"Fine!" cried Jerry. "That will be the crowning bit of evidence. And, once we've convinced them, they'll turn Mason over to us without a murmur."

"And Mitchell?" demanded Tom Gill.

"We'll turn him over to the Indians!" suggested Jimmie Dunn enthusiastically.

Tom looked at him, started to speak, and then his lips met in a hard, straight line.

Jimmie Lad and Jerry went in search of the wounded chief. They found him a hundred yards back in the brush, a bullet-hole through his thigh. After a few reassuring words from Jerry, who spoke their language fluently, he allowed them to carry him to the council-house, where his wound was dressed, he was fed and Jerry began his first advances. These consisted only of assurances that the white men meant no harm and that no more Indians would be fired upon if they did not attack the council-house.

In the meantime Jimmie Dunn and Tom Gill searched the woods near the clearing for other wounded Indians. Two others had been struck by rifle-bullets and three knocked down. But all had been able to get away and could not have been badly hurt.

After a discussion of the situation, it was decided that no action would be taken at once. There were food, water and fuel. They could live in the council-house, and there were enough to maintain constant guard.

Their hopes depended upon the old chief. Jerry talked to him often, though not long at a time. When he showed signs of being convinced, it was planned that he would be carried outside and permitted to call to his people. Scouts were watching them constantly, they felt certain.

Two days passed. Much of the time was spent in sleeping, for all the men had gone for some time without rest, and their activities had been strenuous.

Jerry continued to talk to the chief, and at last he was carried into the open. Without being urged he began to call. When he had received an answer, he began to shout his message. Jerry, listening anxiously, nodded assuringly to the others.

"We've won him over," he whispered in English. "We'll win the others sure."

IT WAS the next night, however, before the chief had instilled sufficient courage into his men to have them come into the clearing. Evidently they believed their weapons were useless against the white men, for they came unarmed. When the men had advanced to

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the center of the opening in a body, the women and children pressed forward to the edge of the timber and watched curiously.

The chief, seated among the white men, spoke for a long time. Jerry's expression told the others that what he said was favorable. In time they began to see evidences of the men accepting their chief's words as the truth.

When he ceased speaking, Jerry advanced with a rifle. He took out a cartridge and passed it among the Indians. He explained that the lead bullet was the arrow, the "quick fire" the bow. He explained that no supernatural powers were necessary to fire the gun and finally induced one of the younger men to try it.

With Jerry's help he aimed it at a dog, which, after sniffing curiously about the assemblage, had sat down in the open twenty yards away. The Indian pulled the trigger and, providentially, the dog toppled over, kicked and then lay still.

The affair was greeted with excited mutterings, and then all the Indians burst into a laugh, a laugh that told the anxious white men that victory was theirs. Jerry immediately presented the rifle and some ammunition to the chief and then asked where his Iroquois canoeman was held. The chief spoke to his men, and the two ran across the clearing into the forest. They returned soon, leading a man between them.

"Where have you been, Louis?" Jerry asked him.

"They kept me tied all this time," was the answer. "That Mitchell—he tell them to, and I could not get any meat and run away."

"Trust Mitchell for that," growled Tom Gill. "He had you fixed right."

"Yes. George is thorough," Jerry laughed. "Like all crooks, he was upset by the unexpected. This time it was your coming. Now I'll explain the binoculars."

He talked in Chippewyan for a moment and then had the chief look through the glasses. They were passed among the men, who turned them upon each other and rolled about with laughter.

"Now for Mitchell," whispered Marshall to Jerry.

At Jerry's suggestion the chief again spoke. When he had finished, four men arose. Two went toward the east, the others into the forest at the south.

"We've won!" exclaimed Jerry in relief. "It will soon be over."

At his suggestion he and Jimmie Lad joined the Indians. They gave what presents they could spare: a knife, a small ax, some matches and a red bandanna handkerchief. A friendly feeling had been established when suddenly every Indian became silent and looked toward the east.

"Mind you," said Jerry to his companions, "the Indians have not gone near my conjuring-tent until now. They did not dare. They have not seen what was in it."

Two Indians were coming quickly across the opening, and each bore a wooden image. The Indians stared, murmured among themselves.

"Get Mitchell," Jerry ordered, and Jimmie Lad and Tom Gill brought the prisoner from the council-house.

Jerry pointed to him and to his unmistakable image, and then the chief, in accordance with his careful coaching, began to explain what had happened.

There was no laughter when he had finished. Every black eye was vengeful, and each was upon Mitchell. Then as one man they arose and started toward him.

"No, by ——; he's mine!" roared Tom Gill.

He leaped in front of Mitchell and raised his rifle. Jimmie Dunn started toward him.

"Tom!" he cried.

"There's no mistake this time, Mitchell!" said the woodsman—and he pulled the trigger.

The medicine-man crumbled into a heap, then rolled over, face upward. There was a hole squarely in the center of his forehead.

The Indians, with a cry of rage, turned upon Tom. He wheeled and faced them, his rifle ready.

"You idiot!" cried Jimmie Dunn. "You've spoiled it all. That was plain murder!"

"It was not!" answered Tom fiercely. "You can't murder something that's a cross between a skunk, a yellow dog, a wolverine and a wolf. I always said he was mine, and now he is."

Perhaps it was the rifle, of which they still stood in some awe. More probably it was the face of the old woodsman and the words which managed to convey their

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meaning despite their being in a strange language. The Indians stopped. One walked forward, stared at Mitchell a moment and then grinned at Tom admiringly.

Marshall Wells and Jimmie Dunn did not utter the remonstrance that was almost at their lips. As much as they deplored the killing, they knew that the old woodsman's hatred for the medicine-man had been prompted solely by what he had done to Jimmie Dunn twenty-two years before; that in reality his love for them was at the bottom of it. As they turned away, they saw the Indians looking across the clearing.

Between the two messengers the chief had sent, Mason was walking toward them. He came slowly, looking fearfully from the Indians to the group of white men. Quite plainly, he did not understand the two being so close, so friendly, and he saw only disaster for himself.

"Mason," said Marshall Wells shortly, "we're going to take you back to Montreal. The Indians will not resist. They know what you are. Mitchell is dead."

The man only stared, his expression ghastly with the four great healing slashes across his face. Then he glanced furtively at the other white men, last of all at Helen. But even in her eyes there was no trace of pity. His body wilted, and in terror he looked again at the man who had pronounced his sentence.

Marshall's lips curled in contempt, and he turned away. But his action stung Mason as nothing else had.

"Sneer, —— you!" he cried in sudden fury. "Sneer! You think you are a man, but you don't know. You don't know what temptation is. You were never cursed with weakness. You are one of those blind prigs that go through life scorning men because they are victims of weaknesses you never had—because they were tempted past their strength."

His rage vanished. The misery of his five years with the oasis Indians, the isolation from others of his race, the loneliness, the regret, the bitter self-accusation and reproach—all had been too heavy a load. The man was whipped, cowed, robbed of every trace of manhood. All except one. The white skin will show through countless layers of filth, somewhere, in some place. Mason's did. He straightened suddenly and looked steadily at Marshall. He did not seem to see any one else. There was a certain dignity in the manner in which he held his head.

"Here," he said, handing Marshall a leather pouch. "In that you will find complete directions for finding the money I stole. It is all there, practically, all except a couple of thousand. And for God's sake, man, don't look at me like that! I'm not all bad. No one is. I'm telling you this now. I want to square it. I never intended to, but now I am."

The Indians had crowded close, curious, trying to understand. One held loosely in his hand the knife Jimmie Lad had given to him. Mason stepped forward, snatched it away, and with the same sweep he added another gash to the four he had suffered Mitchell to cut. The others had been intended as a disguise. The last ended the need of one.

THREE weeks later Helen Corwin and her brother, Jimmie Lad and his father, Tom Gill, Jimmie Dunn and Louis, the Iroquois, camped in the first timber on the east shore of Artillery Lake. The Barren Grounds were behind them. They built a monster fire, and after supper they sat around it, full-stomached, content.

The beautiful weather of their first week on the Barren Grounds had departed with their start up the Thelon River. Snow and cold, gale upon gale, had made of their journey one huge privation. When it did not storm, mosquitoes and black flies made of living a torment.

After they had reached the upper waters of the Hanbury, there was no fuel except moss, and that was kept wet continuously by the succeeding storms. They had started with only a little dried meat, but in the storms they could not hunt or set nets. Twice they had traveled for two days at a time without a mouthful.

They had toiled up a wild, dangerous river and across a height of land. For two weeks at a stretch they had not known dry clothes. Sleeping was a nightmare of cold, of abysmal bodily misery.

Yet in all that time they had been borne forward by an elation which could not be daunted. Despite their weakness and hunger, their suffering and their wretchedness, they always smiled. The hearts of all were too buoyant for anything the Barren Grounds could offer.

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Helen had found her brother. Jimmie Dunn and Marshall Wells had done that for which they had waited so long. They had subjected Jimmie Lad to the tests of the North and had found him true. Tom Gill felt an even greater pride, a pride that was no less than paternal, and he never finished his descriptions of how "the lad there" had, alone, charged a score of Indians.

And, when they had their first fire, their first dry clothes; when they had eaten all they could and knew that there was still more, they gathered about the blaze and fell victims to the spell of the bond by which the Barren Grounds had united them. They had emerged from the furnace, and each felt a pride that not one of the others had been marked by the fire. For a long time no one spoke.

"Well, Jimmie Lad," said Jimmie Dunn at last, "for twenty-two years we planned on taking you to the Barren Grounds, your father and Tom and I. It is about all we did plan, and now it's done. We've come back to the land we knew so well. We've seen it for the last time. We're going out now. It's less than four hundred miles to Fort Resolution. Tomorrow morning, when we get into the canoes, we'll look back and see *de-chinu-le*, as the Indians call it, the land of 'no trees,' for the last time. It's meant a lot to your father and to Tom and me, that country. We'll never forget it, and I think we will never cease to love it. I wonder, Jimmie Lad, was it like home to you?"

The young man glanced up, startled, for he had been dreaming, and Jimmie Dunn had spoken dreamily.

His glance caught that of Helen beside him—held it. Then he reached out a hand slowly, wonderingly, for he was not quite sure at first what he had seen.

Slowly Helen's hand rose to meet his.

"The Barren Grounds meant all I had ever hoped it would mean," Jimmie Lad said in a low voice. "I looked forward all my life to seeing it. I never thought of anything else, and—and they brought me—they brought me Helen."

He reached out his arms, and she slipped across to his side. Before all the others she held up her face, and Jimmie Lad kissed her.

Then, panic-stricken, she tore herself free. The panic lasted only a moment, and she looked steadily at the others.

"I'm not ashamed," she said stoutly. "I—I love you all, and you should all know."

Tom poked at the fire. Jimmie Dunn tamped the ashes in his dead pipe. Jerry, startled, a little ashamed of his sister at first, looked at her proudly, understandingly. Marshall arose and walked to Helen's side.

"God bless you, little girl," he said. "Tom and Jimmie Dunn and I are men, and we wanted to make Jimmie Lad a man. We never thought of anything else but bringing him up here, subjecting him to the test. I see now where we made a mistake. We built him up on one side and neglected the other. And you don't know how full my heart is because it was in the Barren Grounds he found you. The Barren Grounds joined Jimmie Dunn and Tom and me with bonds that few men know. It was their gift to us. I know what they have given to you two."

It was a solemn speech. The tensity of the situation was becoming uncomfortable. Tom Gill, rough old woodsman, saw it, recognized his duty.

"And lad," he said, "remember I'm not as old as I seem. I'm going to be down there in Ontario a long time yet, and I'd like nothing better than a new job of teaching a youngster how to take care of himself in the bush."

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APRON STRINGS

by Edgar Young

Author of "The Son of a Fool," "Converging Trails," etc.

THE way that "Barnsy" had acquired education was something like the darky's horse that starved to death and then froze. He had had education forced upon him and then acquired it. He had not torn knowledge from the printed page by the spluttering flare of an oil lamp. It was acquired by a quicker process. Eisenweister's text-book says, "Stick to your knitting." *Bueno, pues, entonces*, as the spigs say, let's grab the thread and hang to it like a lean-jowled dog to a flea.

Barnsy was a "boomer" telegrapher. As such he was a joy to his fellows and a thorn in the side of personal record clerks, for the duration of his stays was short and reckoned between the time he got the job and the looming of next pay-day on the horizon. He had what has been diagnosed by laymen as itchy feet and by dome-headed professors as wanderitis. By a great amount of cunning and foresight he usually landed in Edmonton, Ontario, in the dead of Winter with a straw hat and canvas shoes on, and in Yuma, Arizona, in the middle of Summer, with heavy woolen underwear, ear-muffs and a coonskin cap. He usually hit the chief operator of the W. U. in some of the largest cities mentioned in the almanacs, dressed in the picturesque garb of a cow-puncher, and he managed to be attired like a frayed Broadway barber when asking the C. D. of a Western railroad for a "sine."

Between cat-naps, "OS-ing" a train by to the dispatcher or chatting with the section boss, Barnsy always managed to find time to dig through the desk drawers for pencils and other souvenirs, study the carved initials of other "boomers" on the walls and table top and read whatever book Fate had hurled from a passing train or some itinerant fatalist had left in his wake. These had been kept, due to the fact that the impedimenta of a modern telegraph office does not include a pillow—and some books that have tired many a weary brain have also rested many a weary head in a fashion not dreamed of by the designer. Also, some operators, in lieu of better diversion, sometimes read them. Thus Barnsy read Herbert Spencer's "First Principles," Barker's "Almanac," the Bible and Laura Jean Libby's "Souls Afire" at Yavapai, Arizona; Alexander Dumas' full works in paper covers at Laggan, Alberta; Dr. Shelfiot's "Six-Inch Shelf" at Skagway, Maine; and Darwin's theory at Monkey, Va.

He had read political literature and by turns had been a Republican, Democrat, Socialist, Anarchist, Bolshevist and a World League-ist, besides some of the lesser and more obscure political cults. He had thrilled with the idealism of art and had surged with realism in art; he had battered heads with the scientists and metaphysicians and had studied "How to Play the Banjo Without a Teacher." For a text-book on story writing, see paragraph 1.

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One day he awoke to the fact that he was a finished intellectual product. It is useless to state which especial railroad telegraph table he had been dozing upon. Let the Southern Pacific, Santa Fé, L. & N., C. P. R. and the other roads erect separate monuments if they are so minded. He spent a few futile months chasing the greased pig of knowledge, whom he found to be not only covered with the product of Armour's kettles but also shod with seven-league hoofs, as well as some speedy bird to lay hands upon. His perspective lengthened until he saw the universe as a cell of a grain of sawdust floating in the middle of the Pacific. There is one stage beyond this, but I hesitate to state it for fear my apartment should be cluttered with scientists and moving-picture photographers trying to pry me loose from the secret. Also they run a special train each day to Central Islip, where the padded-cell athletes exercise.

At about this stage of the picture, reel three, Barnsy bought a flat-bottomed rowboat—made from boxes that had contained Indian products manufactured in Brooklyn—from a Mojave Indian at Needles, California, for six-bits in money and a bottle of pain-killer. Taking unto himself a chunk of dried beef and other civilized foods, he shoved off from the shore and started drifting down the Colorado River, headed for some island he had picked in the Gulf of Lower California. He had doped out a scheme to beat the game, which is variously called in Hoyle: Knowledge *vs.* Ignorance, Capital *vs.* Labor, Science *vs.* Religion, Good *vs.* Evil, Democracy *vs.* Autocracy, Recognition *vs.* Obscurity, etc. *ad infinitum*—otherwise known to lay people as getting enough ahead to gain a lap on the sheriff or take it easy for a spell.

With a great amount of brain-racking back into the night of his education, he had come to remember that hogs run wild on many of the islands of the Gulf of Lower California and that wild geese go there to spend the Winter. Result: the inspiration of a great unexploited business.

He was going down there to search out these virgin fields and also a good stout club and the wherewithal to make a large trap in which to snare geese. There was only one fly in this lard, leather, fertilizer, feather and dried meat industry. That was that about once a year he would be forced to load up his boat and come to Yuma or Needles to sell his products. He vowed fervently to himself that he would slay in primitive fashion the first priest, preacher or missionary who came down into his domain trying to hog-tie him with civilization.

Such were the fruits of knowledge thrust upon Barnsy by cruel railroads who do not furnish pillows for their operators when they "take their hay" upon the table. Small wonder it is that labor continually strives with capital. Who wouldn't, under the circumstances?

Hold on to your seat, for reel four is coming. Reel three ended with a fade-out showing Barnsy and his box-boat growing smaller and smaller and the piano-player coaxing barbaric music from a poorly tuned piano. It is only the fact that reel four opens with us as witnesses to his arriving at a small river wharf that stays our flow of tears. I don't know how we got there, but here we are.

BARNSY languidly tied his boat to one of the redwood posts that supported the rickety affair, took up an empty water jug and started out on a quest for something thinner than the river fluid, which is black when it isn't red. Loftily from his perch astride the universe he surveyed the small river town. It was a typical desert place. From each end of it like handles to a frying-pan ran the track of a railroad. A small clutter of huts ranged about a dinky red depot. The huts were built of cross-ties stood on end and were covered with about three feet of sand. The depot, small as it was, had two roofs, one about two feet above the other, desert style, to allow for a passage of air beneath. Barnsy noted that the sand was hot. If he had had some ham, he could have fried ham and eggs in the sand, if he had the eggs. (B. C. 490.)

Barnsy wended his burning way toward the station, for he knew that each station had a cistern underneath that was kept filled with water brought in tank-cars from afar. He noted that the station bore the name "HOT BLAST" on a board tacked on to a gable end. Coming nearer, he heard the dispatcher fretfully calling the initials "HB" and sensed that he was calling the very station he was approaching. The "ham" was no doubt asleep. Barnsy

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stalked into the diminutive waiting-room and peered through the ticket window into the telegraph office. What he saw caused him to stand transfixed, gazing with a dreamy look in his eye. To Barnsy's eyes she was the most beautiful creature he had ever beheld. From hog-butchering and feather-pulling Barnsy's heart turned to thoughts of love.

She was seated at the table with her face upturned and resting on one hand, sleeping the sleep of the innocent. Barnsy gloated over the pouting lips, ripe as cherries, the peach-like complexion, the heavily fringed eyelids, the shell-like ears, with all the boldness of an unobserved lover. The dispatcher's calling grated on his nerves. He gently tiptoed through the door and answered "I I HB."

The dispatcher snapped out to make three copies of a train order, or, in railroad gibberish, to make three on a thirty-one. When he had finished, he released the boards and dropped them to danger. Then he turned to regard the girl op.

She was awake and staring at him half dreamily.

"You were asleep on duty," ventured Barnsy, blushing shamefacedly like a schoolboy.

"Yes, and I just think it's awful mean of that chief dispatcher to make me 'double' through last night. What's the matter—couldn't he get any one sooner?"

The truth dawned on Barnsy that this road needed an operator and needed one badly.

"Better run on home to bed, little girl. I'll tell you all about it tomorrow A.M. when you relieve me."

And, as she disappeared through the door, Barnsy asked the trick man to call the chief to the wire if he wanted to hire a real first-class man.

I refuse to be commonplace. Just run the rest of the reel for yourself.

SIGNALING FLAGS

BY LAMBERT TERRY

A SAUCY bit o' stick and a gaudy little flag,
With a giddy little flick and a "Weary-Willy" wag,
And there's something soporific,
In the dizzily prolific,
"Allegretto" hieroglyphic
Of the big blue flag,
With its flut—flut—flutter,
Like a photographic shutter,
In a syncopated stutter of a Yankee rag;
And it's quick—quick—quicker
Than the rattle of a "Ticker"—
Is the fascinating flicker of the big blue flag.

There is beauty in the blink of a "Begbie" for a while,
Or the teeny-weeny wink of a mirror at a mile;
But it's better than a ballet,
Is the rattle and the rally,
Of a top-speed tally
On the big blue flag,
With its chat—chat—chatter—
"What the devil is the matter?"
Oh! It's madder than a hatter, that wag—wig—wag;
And it's gid—gid—giddy
As a "Gutta-percha Kiddie"
Is the "umty—iddy—iddy" of the big blue flag.

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THE WHITE FROG

by Charles Beadle

Author of "Witch-Doctors," "The Tree of Life," etc.

"WISH I had lived in those days!" exclaimed young Charters, closing a magazine he had been reading by firelight.

"What days?" I demanded, sprawling on my blankets, staring at the stars through the canopy of leaves.

"Oh, these Indian days your tribe is so fond of scribbling about."

"I'm mighty glad I didn't!" remarked Mandeville from the other side of the fire. "They were no more romantic than these days. Only the smoke of time."

"Out of the mouth of babes!" I quoted laughing.

"Oh, rot!" persisted Charters. "Half of the things never happened, except in imagination. What I'd like to know is just what percentage of mendacity is added to the real thing to make it palatable to—to——"

"Unsophisticated youths, huh?" I inquired. "You talk like an immoral milkman studying the pure food regulations! Just what's the matter now? Rotten yarn?"

"No; quite a good yarn. But it is obviously a yarn. That's the trouble. You know you fellows can't get away with the 'queer,' unusual happenings. They just don't happen in these prosaic days of flivvers—if ever they did."

"They do, young Solomon!"

"Yes; on the order of I know a man who had a cousin whose maternal aunt——"

"Sometimes yes, sometimes no, Mr. Socrates! Of course, if in your extensive travels in a Pullman between New York City and Syracuse——"

"Oh, cut it out!" butted in Mandeville. "Have you got a personal yarn of the marvelous?"

"Marvelous? Well, uncanny rather. But——"

"Oh, you're a professional liar," observed Charters somewhat crudely. "If it's a good yarn, why haven't you written it?"

"Because I have respect for my clients," I retorted sharply. "I always try it on the dog first!"

"All right!" laughed Mandeville. "I'll be dog!"

"Me, too," agreed Charters.

"Well, this yarn's about a frog," I began, after stoking my pipe. "Kick that log on to the fire. It's chilly."

"One moment. Is this yarn of the 'aunt-cousin' order, or did it happen to you?"

"The fact that I am about to attempt to tell the story precludes the possibility of my having filled the principal rôle," I said severely. "But I had an orchestra stall for the show. Now will you be good?

"The stage is set in Central Rhodesia and at a fort of the British South African Mounted Police, a small granite hill like a hog's back sticking out of a swamp surrounded by kopjes, as they call 'em there; hills running from about five hundred to a thousand feet high, mostly timbered, with huge boulders and stones showing through like the skin on a mangy dog's back. The hill nearest the fort was rather like the back of a bald giant's head rising sheer out of the swamp with a fringe of hair just above his collar, where hundreds of baboons lived.

"Well, on one end of the hog's back,

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perched on the rump as if it were slipping off, was the white man's camp: six *kiers*—huts, you know—made of *darga*—mud, I mean—and sticks, and with thatched roofs, forming a tiny square with lumps of granite sticking through. Sergeant Trotter's was at one end and the mess-hut at the other, and we four troopers, Hugill, Barnet, Lemare and myself, on the flanks. A little farther along, over the loins as it were, was the Black Watch, the native police, about a hundred of 'em and their wives. After that the rest of the hill was covered with a short scrub and thorn-trees which always suggested the hair on Baboon Hill.

"Oh, that Baboon Hill! I can see it now. I could draw every blessed crack and water fissure, every odd whisker on that —— cranium today! Right on the southern edge against the sky was a dwarf tree which looked like the single hair of the comic supplement sketches. I used to stare and stare at it until I began to giggle!

"Well, this was Fort Motokos, an outstation of D Troop. Our headquarters was at Inyanga, about a hundred and fifty miles to the east on the Portuguese border. Our nearest station was M'Rewas, about eighty to the southwest, but with the usual brilliant reasoning of administrations D Troop had to furnish the detail for this station. The trail crossed four rivers which were impassable in the rainy season, whereas to M'Rewas there were only two rivers and almost a real trail. The point of this is that for two or three months we were completely isolated; even the mail only turned up about once in three weeks.

"We were supposed to patrol the district once a month with a platoon of the Black Watch. But half the time we hadn't any horses available. Originally we had two; one great gaunt beast who had been a water-cart horse in the Tenth Hussars during the Mashona Rebellion, the Camel—and, my God, to ride he was like a camel or at a gallop more like an earthquake—and the other was a little polo-pony. But usually they were sick so that whoever did the patrol had to go foot clogging.

"Johnny Lemare and I did most of the patrolling; used to beg of Trotter, lethargic and *dop*-soaked, like a dog for a piece of sugar just to get away from that infernal camp. The patrol merely consisted of ambling along from village to village around a great circle and back. Nothing ever happened except shooting along the Ruania, for the Mashonas are a poor race without the guts of the Matabele—skinny little devils.

"WELL, Lemare had been on that station nearly two years and I only eight months. So I had some life left, and he, like Trotter, had been inoculated by the country, I suppose. Anyway, he was mighty dull, sulky and taciturn. Taciturn! Why, for a week you'd get nothing out of him but 'yes' or 'no.' After that I gave up and tried 'Nosey' Hugill, a cheerful sort of chap, but he spoke the local lingo rather well and preferred to sit and talk, when he did talk, to the natives.

"That riled me, because I knew very little at all—merely enough to ask for things and make official inquiries. As for Barnet —'Pasty,' we called him—he never wished to go on patrol or do anything; his forte was eating and sleeping. He was too lazy to ride the Camel even when the beast was fit.

"Trotter was nearly always half-drunk. He'd sit—Lord, how often I've watched him—like a squat Buddha in his pants and half-dirty shirt on a bit of rock, which I could see from my *kier*, outlined against the bald kopje, never moving except to shove a pinch of Boer tobacco from the little bag tucked under his belt into his mouth and then take a swig of *dop*—Cape brandy—and chew the mixture.

"Trotter was rather amusing when he felt good. He'd chew and drink for hours, yarning about the customs and ways of various tribes. He was a Colonial and he certainly knew the natives from A to Z. Lemare and Hugill would sit in the mess-hut, Hugill with that long melancholy nose of his, and drink it all in.

"When I had arrived, Trotter, Hugill and I messed together. Trotter said Barnet's table manners made him ill. But three months afterward our mess broke up. Trotter said he couldn't stand our faces at every meal; it was like being married, he explained, and he hated that. So we fed in our respective huts and had meals cooked by each one's private boy, except Barnet and Lemare. Sometimes we asked each other to dinner. It made a change.

"There was absolutely nothing to do. Of course, we were supposed to do many

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things. Even the Black Watch only drilled when their sergeant felt inclined. Looking back, I scarcely know what on earth I did with myself all day. The chief amusement seemed to be sitting on a rock—each one had his own rock and bitterly resented any of his mates daring to use it—and staring at that bald kopje; that and potting at the baboons in the whiskers of the bald head.

"Sometimes Lemare and I used to wander out with a gun. We could invariably get a buck and any amount of birds down in the swamps. But gradually even that sport began to pall. Barnet confined his sportsmanship to eating. Only once do I remember Trotter ever going out with a gun. Then he got nothing—which was enough to discourage him for life apparently.

"We'd get up at what time we liked. Dressing consisted of climbing into a pair of pants and a shirt. One's boy kept rifle and gear clean. That sitting on a rock business developed into an unconscious ritual. Nearly every sunset would find us white men squatting on our respective rocks, each taking no notice of the others and each staring at that Baboon Hill. Oh, except when a mail might be due, and then we sat on the opposite side of the rump like five dirty crows, staring out across the swamps trying to catch the glimpse of the mail-runner crossing a bare patch in the scrub about a mile away.

"Most of the day I'd lie around in my *kier* and read papers months old, a few books and magazines; read and read 'em over and over again. Always at my solitary meal I'd stick up a tattered magazine and read the ads. Queer! You get a perfect mania for ads; I mean, you find yourself having favorite ads which appear to afford you infinite satisfaction to read over and over again. I recollect that one was of some smoked ham. I think I read that —— thing until bully beef or venison tasted of ham.

"At night I'd hear Trotter in the *kier* across the tiny square, jabbering away in Mashona or Sintabilli to some native, and Hugill's cracked baritone singing ditties to himself or mostly talking. He had the walls of his hut plastered with cuttings from Sunday supplements and would sit and literally chatter away to one or a group of 'em for hours. It seemed uncanny at first. But then I began to do the same thing. Every one living alone does, more or less.

"Of course there was the local amusement to entertain us frequently. Malaria, I mean. One or two of us would often be down with a go for a week or ten days. It became quite ordinary. So much so that one would hardly take any notice of the other who was sick. I recollect my first 'go.' I was delirious for ten days. Trotter, I think, gave me quinin and phenacetin, but otherwise my boy looked after me. Once I 'came to' under my bunk, hugging a seven-pound can of beef. Another time Hugill in delirium ran off the kopje and nearly drowned himself in a swamp hole. Such a life would kill most. But yet it didn't seem to kill us—then.

"One day Trotter was yarning to Hugill and me about a native legend that the top of Baboon Hill was haunted by a particularly malignant spirit. I suggested to Hugill that we go and explore, and to my amazement he was keen. We set out with our boys and a couple of the Black Watch. From the north the hill was shaped rather like some enormous animal lying down with his head erect. We made our way around to the tail, where, climbing through boulder-strewn undergrowth, we got on to the rump. But the devil himself couldn't persuade any native to follow us farther.

"We went on walking over a saddle of boulders, but at the base of the neck, as it were, we had some fairly tough climbing to do over bare slippery granite. Finally, by taking off our boots, we gained the summit to find to my surprize that it was a hollow basin which at that time, just before the rainy season, had small pools of stagnant water. Around the edges was a good deal of vegetation and quite a bunch of trees unseen from the swamps below. There was no sign of baboons, as I had half-expected, to explain the legend of the malignant spirit. Either it was too far from food supplies, or they didn't care for the climb over the bare granite slopes. There were a few birds and any amount of bright-hued lizards.

"When I was poking about in a crevasse looking for fossil shells, which I knew might be found there, I came across a tiny white frog. Funny little chap, he was, about an inch long with pink eyes and pink feet. Hugill decided that he must

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be the evil spirit of the mountain and that he was going to take him down with us for luck. He put the frog in a match-box. We hunted about for a long time, but we couldn't find any more of 'em.

"WHEN we got down, our boys and the two policemen were astounded to see us alive. Now, although this was a local legend, they appeared to be convinced as much as the Mashonas. While we were having some grub, Hugill showed them the white frog. Lordy! It was all we could do to stop a stampede—and by the row they kicked up the frog might have been the devil in person. Hugill was all cock-a-whoop saying that he was right; that they said that the white frog was the real devil of the mountain. He laughed at their superstition. After a while they got sulky and wouldn't talk about it any more.

"Of course, Hugill showed his prize to the other fellows, who weren't a bit interested—except Barnet, who wanted to know whether it was good to eat, and Trotter, who told Hugill to get rid of it else we'd have bad luck as the natives believed. Hugill said he would, mumbling to himself that Trotter was half a native anyway. But, of course, he didn't.

"The first thing that happened was that Hugill's boy refused to go into his *kier* to clean up because the devil was there. Hugill beat him. But he would not enter at any price. Hugill fired him, but he couldn't get another boy and so had to do the work himself—and that wasn't much. My boy began to act queerly, too, always glimmering his eyes at Hugill's *kier* across the square, as if expecting to see something. I told him not to be a *mompara*—idiot—but he mumbled that things were going to happen.

"Next morning, as a matter of fact, the pony slipped going down the kopje to the grazing-ground and broke his foreleg. Of course, we had to shoot him. That night the black sergeant, Munyangombo, came to me as the senior trooper—Trotter was ill or drunk—and complained that 'Ugilli' was cursing the camp by having the devil frog and that the accident to the pony proved it! Naturally I told him that he was idiotic; just as if a pony couldn't fall down a slippery kopje without being pushed by a devil god, and the beast had always been as clumsy as a clothes-horse, anyway.

"But the sergeant complained to Trotter next day, and Trotter ordered Hugill to get rid of the thing as being calculated to demoralize native discipline. Hugill said that he had, but I knew, as every native did, that he was lying.

"Life ran as monotonously as ever for a week. I had just told the Black Watch sergeant that he was a Mashona fool when I went down with malaria. Well, that was nothing unusual, and it was a very mild dose anyway, but one night I was a bit light-headed, and I awoke with a crazy idea in my head that two lions—oh, there were lions around—were trying to get through my roof! I had a night-lantern going and I could have sworn that I saw one paw, claws as well, sticking through the thatch. I lost my head and, sitting on my bed, began blazing away through the roof and yelling blue murder. The next thing was that, seeing the reed door opening, I mistook Trotter for another lion. I didn't bag him, fortunately.

"This was, Sergeant Munyangombo persisted, another proof of the working of the frog. Trotter said that he was going to search Hugill's *kier*. He did, but he found nothing, as the obstinate idiot had hidden it. Then the devil thing began to get real mad, or it seemed like that, for of course it couldn't have been really; still— You fellows needn't laugh! But within four hours Trotter went down with black-water.

"Now the main treatment for black-water is to keep the heart going as well as to clear the kidneys, but poor old Trotter might as well have drunk milk and water for all the stimulation that brandy and champagne from the medical comforts could afford him. I got badly scared for Trotter. The only chance to get a doctor was at the Kaiser Wilhelm Mine, sixty miles to the north and with fortunately no big rivers to cross. But that was only a chance, as there was no resident medico there. However, I decided to take it.

"So I saddled up the Camel, who happened to be fairly fit, and rode off. Poor old Camel; he had never been driven as he was then in all his hoary life! As usual, about four o'clock the rain came up. There was no trail except the Kaffir paths from one village to another. But, as the luck

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had it, the weather did not clear up at sundown, as was usually the case, but poured harder than ever. We pushed on at a walk in the inky blackness. Fortunately I knew that road well. But it took me all my time, steering by the contour of the hills in the flashes of lightning, to keep anything like the right direction. The Camel didn't like it; neither did I.

"A dozen times we lost all track of a path. Sometimes feeling with my hands in the dark, sometimes with the aid of a match, I found some path that seemed to lead in the right direction. Once, crossing a swamp, we got badly bogged, and the Camel was a heavy beast. But we got through somehow, and, when daylight broke, I found myself a little on the wrong side of a line of kopjes. The poor old Camel must have imagined that I thought he was a baboon by the way I chased and led him, persuaded and cursed him over dongas and rocks through a slight gap in these hills. Indeed his poor old creased body and limbs looked more like a prehistoric leviathan recently dug up than a horse who did amazing stunts.

"But we did it and arrived in time for breakfast to discover that, of course, the doc had left for Salisbury the week before. However, Goddard, the mine secretary, who said he had been a medico at some remote period, offered to come along, and I accepted. We started right back. Goddard rode in a *machila*—a hammock carried by natives, you know—and I hardened my heart and drove the old Camel at it again.

"We got in late that evening. The Camel couldn't walk for two months after that, but Trotter was still alive. The whole trip was really wasted, for the only medical lore that Goddard had was his kind heart—and that wasn't much of a stimulant for poor Trotter.

"HE WAS very weak. Goddard was sure that he couldn't last long. We stayed with him in that little mud hut. He was conscious most of the time and mighty cheerful, although toward morning he smiled feebly, said that he was going out this trip and asked for one last chew. Goddard gave it to him. What did it matter? And also another 'go' of *dop*. The favorite combination cheered him up. He grinned. Just as dawn was filtering through, he looked at us, tried to turn over, said, 'Hell!'—and then he had gone.

"I suppose I was young, and you fellows will think superstitious, but the black sergeant's words and that —— frog began to get on my nerves. I knew that Hugill still had him, for I saw him catching small flies to feed the beast. I mentioned the matter to Goddard, but he—well perhaps he thought he had his alleged medical reputation to keep up, for he merely laughed at me and maintained that Trotter had gone under from too much booze, which had induced black-water. As a matter of fact, thinking things over calmly, that diagnosis sounded mighty convincing, for booze kills more fellows out there than ever malaria did.

"Well, we buried poor old Trotter down below in the swamp; a horrid job, and he was awful heavy. After that Goddard went back to Kaiser Wilhelm Mine, and we settled down once more. As it was the beginning of the long rainy season, I could not expect another non-com. to come out to take over for two or three months, and somehow, even then, I didn't relish my job. That evening Sergeant Munyangombo stalked up and solemnly denounced the white frog once more for the death of the *mlungu* (white man), but I was reassured by Goddard's opinion and dismissed the silly fellow.

"Well, things ran on quite smoothly for ten days or more. We began a general mess again, too. I don't quite know why. Sort of more companionable in a way, and Trotter had been a little domineering and cantankerous at times, although even I had to admit that Pasty Barnet was enough to make a man sick to see the amount of grub he shoveled into that pallid fat face of his. A week later a call came from a native commissioner about half-way to M'Rewas for an escort to arrest a Jew trader who had slipped across the Portuguese border.

"Usually the N. C. called on M'Rewas, but the Inyadiri River was in full flood. I wanted to go myself for the change but could not, as I was senior trooper in charge. It was Lemare's turn for duty, but he happened to be convalescent after a go of fever; so I detailed Hugill. Hugill scowled and complained that he hadn't got a boy. I offered to lend him mine, but my boy refused pointblank. I couldn't

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make him, as, of course, he was not in the service; so I told Hugill that, if he would keep that fool frog, he would have to put up with the consequences.

"He grumbled and began to prepare his kit. Then he came over to my *kier* with Pasty Barnet; said that he was sick; that it wasn't his turn, anyway, and that Barnet wanted to go. That Pasty wanted to do anything except eat or sleep was almost incredible, but he corroborated the amazing statement. I supposed that Hugill had squared it with him; anyway, it didn't matter which one went, and I was feeling a bit rotten, too.

"So Pasty trudged off next morning with a platoon of the Black Watch, for the Camel was still on the sick-list after his trip to the Kaiser Wilhelm Mine. I was lying in my bunk smoking and reading some station papers I had had to take over from Trotter when about noon a perspiring Black Watch suddenly stood in my hut door, saluted and stuttered out that the *mlungu* was *kufa* (dead).

"At first I couldn't comprehend what could have happened. A rising of natives occurred to me; the Black Watch had killed him. But no; as far as I could make out Pasty had insisted upon taking a short-cut across the swamp through a part where all of us who went shooting knew it was dangerous. They came to the dangerous part, an open vlei of sweet and short green grass, which any born fool knows is suspicious; for that usually signifies bog formed by a basin of granite beneath the alluvial which holds the water there.

"The Black Watch apparently mutinied outright. He called them cowards and *momparas* and laughed at them and began to run across! The Black Watch shouted, '*Ikona mushla!*'—no good—but he ran on; Pasty weighing a good two hundred and twenty pounds! Of course, within thirty yards he was up to his knees. But he struggled on, and, as far as I could gather, he must have struck an outcrop of rock, which often occurs in the middle of the basin, for suddenly he was capering about—dancing, they said—on dry land, shouting and waving to them to follow him. But they wouldn't. They yelled '*Ikona mushla*' again and again.

"Then Pasty got mad, apparently, for suddenly, after calling them more names, he shouted to them to go around, as they were Mashona curs, and tried again to rush across. The man said a devil got him by the feet, which probably meant that he slipped; anyway Pasty plunged head-foremost into the swamp! They saw his feet kicking for some time and the rifle sticking up. Then everything disappeared.

"Got a cigaret, Charters? Thanks.

"Well, that made me feel rather queer. I walked across to the mess-hut, where I found Lemare and Hugill having lunch. When I told them, Hugill stroked his big nose and said, 'Bloody glad I didn't go!' But Lemare sat silent for several minutes, sighed and rose, remarking, 'Lucky swine!'

" 'What the devil's the matter with you?' I demanded testily.

"He turned in the door and stared at me with that melancholy bilious look usual to him.

" 'Bloody sight better to be buried in a swamp than be buried alive, ain't it?' he drawled and mouched away, chewing a biscuit.

"Hugill began to snicker.

" 'What the ——'s the matter with you all?' I shouted, exasperated at I did not know what.

" 'Can't I laugh if I'm having a good time?'

" 'If you don't like it, why the devil don't you get a transfer then?'

" 'Mebbe I will,' he retorted, 'but not the way Pasty went!'

" 'Don't know so much about that!' I snapped, conscious that I was so irritated that I expected another dose of fever. 'Anyway you're detailed for duty to-morrow. Johnny's sick—and, for God's sake, take that —— frog with you and see if you can't follow Pasty's road.'

" 'Superstitious old woman!' he sneered. 'You're as bad as the blacks. More likely Johnny'll sign on in the winged police than me. I've had enough 'f a cop's job.'

" 'Oh, shut up!'

"I bolted my piece of everlasting bacon and chicken and went back to my *kier*, wishing that the gathering afternoon storm would break and cool off the air.

"ABOUT six o'clock I heard the drums in the native quarters begin to beat. I got up, intending to stop them, but then I recollected that it would be the night of the full moon and that the

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Black Watch was allowed, according to native custom, to hold a dance. I went across to the mess-hut, intending that after the morrow I would revert to my old custom of feeding alone. Lemare wandered in a few minutes after, but Hugill did not turn up.

"Lemare was more taciturn and melancholy than usual, although I did not notice it particularly, for frequently we would feed all together without exchanging a word. We all knew each other's jokes, life histories and disappointments to boredom. Hugill, I imagined, if I thought of his absence at all, was ill or playing up to being ill to avoid the morning duty. When the mess-boy brought in the coffee, Lemare looked up from contemplating the door through his hands and said quietly:

" 'I feel rather rotten. D'you mind if I have a small bottle from the comforts?'

" 'All right,' I said shortly, giving him the key; 'only go easy, for there isn't much left—after old Trotter.'

"Lemare grunted, went off to the storehouse and came back with a small bottle. I was drinking the usual *dop*. But, when I heard the pop and the fizz, I sort of got thirsty, too, and anyway I was really only convalescent, which accounted for my unusual irritability. I don't mean that I'm a saint at any time, but malaria does wear your nerves. I sent the boy for another bottle of *manzi muti*—medicine water—and threw away the *dop*. When Lemare heard the message, he filled my empty glass and stood, with as near a smile as I'd ever seen on his face, holding up his glass.

" 'Here's to the next transfer!' said he. 'And I hope to —— it isn't as rotten as this hole!'

" 'Here's to!' said I.

"We finished my bottle in silence, staring out at the bald skull of Baboon Hill with a halo of gold around it and listening to the throb of the drums. That champagne appeared to run through my veins. I began to feel good once more. I called the boy and threw the key at him, telling him to bring a big bottle. That pop seemed better than the last. Lemare drank a glass and then suddenly began to talk in a quiet rambling sort of tone. He talked about himself, of course; although, by the way, he was the only one in the station who hadn't bored every one else with family stories and personal troubles. I sat on, sipping, smoking and listening.

"He was really an Austrian, had been in the army and had married a wonderfully beautiful woman. He rambled on describing exactly how beautiful she was and all the rest of it. Sentimental, of course, but I didn't see that then. And—and—well, we did have another bottle. I felt so much better, and I had felt so rotten. You know. Well, with the second bottle he came out with the fact that he had had to leave the army because he had married a woman with no money—not of the caste and all that, and then, so he said, to save her he had embezzled some money and had had to clear out.

"She had married or gone off with some one else. That was why he was in the police—and he couldn't forget it—and all that. Well there was nothing extraordinary in the yarn, for men of all sorts were in the B. S. A. P. 'Duke's sons, cook's sons, (Pasty, by the way, was the son of a cook and a confectioner by trade—that's why he loved eating, I suppose—still he could make splendid tarts!) sons of a belted earl!' as Kipling has it. Well, he wandered on, talking away, and then became horribly sentimental. Said life wasn't worth living.

"You know how emotional some of these foreigners are. As a matter of fact he began to weep. I felt uncomfortable—and, well, alcohol has the devil of an effect on fever-weakened people. However, he suddenly streaked out a string of oaths in Austrian or something, threw a bottle on the floor, tragically announced that his wife had used to bathe in the —— stuff and stumbled out of the hut.

"As I walked across to my hut the great moon was rising above the swamp, tinting the bald head of Baboon Hill with blue, so bright that you could see each leaf on a tree. I had a chair just under the eave of my hut, which I had made out of elephant grass and branches. I sat down, sort of fascinated by the moon. No; I wasn't drunk by any means, but I had needed that champagne, and it had put some life into me. To the right was Trotter's old hut, and to the left Pasty Barnet's. The suggestion made me—well, queer. Forty per cent. death-rate in a few hours was fairly high even for Motokos.

"I had just remarked how yellow was the glow of Lemare's candle against the

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green sky when I noticed that Hugill's hut was in darkness. Perhaps he was not malingering after all. I went out and sat upon my own rock, staring at the kopje. The rhythm of the drums began to affect my mind. I found myself humming some idiotic ditty to the beat.

"A SHOT which sounded like a big gun crashed out behind me and was caught up and echoed time and again by Baboon Hill. I leaped to my feet, nearly scared out of my wits. I stood for a moment wondering what on earth could have happened. The rhythm of the drums continued. Nobody seemed to have noticed. After all it was not extraordinary for some one to take a pot at a baboon or a hyena. Still, why didn't Lemare come out to see what it was about? I walked across toward his hut, crying:

" 'Johnny! Johnny! Who the devil's——'

"Then I saw through the door a figure lying in a crumpled heap. Ouf! A bullet through the mouth makes an ugly mess. He had pinned a piece of paper on to his table which read—

"Here's to the next transfer.

"The spirit of the champagne left me. I felt weak and sick. I came out, mumbling: 'Good God! Good God!' Then I went across to wake up Hugill. I shouted at him but got no answer. I struck a match. No one was there. In a sudden panic I rushed back to my own hut. I felt uncanny. Scared at the shadows of the moon. I shouted for Sergeant Munyangombo. No answer. Angrily I hastened toward the native camp.

"The quarters of the Black Watch were formed on two sides of a square, and in the middle they had lighted fires around which they were shuffling, the women one way, the men the other, crooning some everlasting chant. I felt eery and unnerved. These figures, with blue and red lights of moon and fire sheening them through the wisps of smoke, seemed sinister: some devil's dance. The moon was so bright that I could distinguish the different men.

"Just as I reached the sergeant's hut, the first, I noticed a stranger seated by the fire, a wizened old man, who was chanting away like a gramaphone. That he was a Mashona I could see by certain bracelets of copper wire. His hands were waving to and fro. Just as I was wondering what on earth he thought he was doing, I saw another figure squatted in front of him within the circling group of men. He was white and clad in only a shirt. I recognized Hugill! I stopped, more scared than ever. As I looked, the old man daubed Hugill's neck with some stuff from a calabash.

"For the moment I was so amazed that I merely gasped. No white man does that sort of thing—unless he goes 'fantee'—native, you know. I concluded that he must be drunk or delirious with fever, but, just as I made toward him, a voice murmured—

" '*Inkoos!*'

"The figure of Sergeant Munyangombo in his loin-cloth and bangles loomed so big and savage in the moonlight that for a moment I didn't recognize him.

" 'What do you mean,' I began, pointing at Hugill, 'by letting the *mlungu* come——'

"But Sergeant Munyangombo had begun to talk in a low serious voice which made me listen. The *Inkosi*—that's me—knew that, as he had told me, the white frog was the devil of the mountain, who was very angry at being taken away by a stranger and that therefore he was very dangerous, as everybody knew; again that, as he had told me, the devil spirit had killed the pony and then the big sergeant *Inkoos*. And after that had he not made the fat *mlungu* to run into the swamp so that he could catch him by the leg and drown him in the bog?

"I exclaimed at this statement, but somehow I could not help listening.

"Now the devil spirit was very angry indeed and would kill me and everybody in the station and after that all the people in the villages about. So in their fear they had consulted the great witch-doctor, who everybody knew was the greatest wise man in all Mashonaland, and he had said that the only way to prevent the evil spirit from making all this trouble was to make such magic that he would enter the soul of the *mlungu* Ugilli (Hugill), for after that he would be unable to make black magic against anybody else. This good magic the celebrated witch-doctor had just made so that now the devil spirit was in Hugill and Hugill's soul was in the white frog.

"For a moment I was both angry at this absurd statement and terribly scared.

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I was about to tell him that he was under arrest and that I would send them and the witch-doctor, too, to the native commissioner for punishment for having broken the law which forbids the practise of witchcraft. But I saw the image of the crumpled bloody heap in the hut. I didn't believe the silly superstition, of course, but yet—well, I tried to tell myself that this idiotic ceremony, whatever they had been doing, didn't amount to much, anyway.

"I must get Hugill back to his hut and see to the other business. Also it occurred to me that probably Munyangombo had gotten some native beer, which was supposed to be forbidden in camp. So I said it was '*Mushla*'—all right—and told him to tell the *mlungu* that I wanted him.

"MUNYANGOMBO seemed very pleased with this and went straight up to Hugill and quite familiarly pulled him out of the circle of the dance and said something to him. Hugill replied. I couldn't catch what he said, but Munyangombo refused energetically. Then Hugill dived forward through the crowd, which parted right and left, and stooped over something before the fire.

"As he picked it up, I caught the gleam of the match-box. He had undoubtedly had the white frog there for the witch-doctor to mumble incantations over. He came toward me, looking in his shirt in the moonlight like a walking corpse. His eyes were shining, too, as with fever, and he reeled slightly. I said as cheerfully as I could, wishing to pacify him—

" 'Come on, old boy, lights out!'

"He stared at me queerly and followed without a word, but, when we had reached our own quarters, he stopped and began to laugh.

" 'I've been having a devil of a time!' he informed me, holding up the match-box in the moonlight. 'Rummy—they've been making me chief; —— of a chief! Me and the —— frog! No more —— cops! I'm going to live on the —— mountain! Hooray!'

"I glanced at him sharply, caught the glint of his eye and decided he hadn't been malingering but really had a bad go of fever on.

" 'Come on, Nosey,' I said soothingly. 'Time——'

"But the absent-minded use of his nickname infuriated him. He ripped out a string of oaths and flung himself upon me.

"We grappled. But I wasn't as strong as I had thought I was. Neither was he. We fought weakly to and fro. My knees collapsed. He fell on top of me and hit me in the face. We rolled over, and I punched him. We struggled on until we were both so exhausted that we couldn't scrap any longer. While we lay opposite to each other on the sandy square in the moonlight, panting and glaring at each other, a silly idea came into my head that the witch-doctor had done something; that perhaps the devil spirit was in Hugill, which had made him crazy.

"He spat some incoherent names at me and laboriously began to crawl toward his hut. Shambling on his hands and knees, he looked like a white bear in the moonlight. I laughed or giggled. He stopped, turned his head and called out a name. I rose to my knees in anger. Then I saw something move. Beside me was the match-box half-open and partly broken in the fight, and distinct in the moonlight was the white frog, which jumped again as I looked.

"In sudden futile anger I raised my boot and brought it down on the frog, squashing it flat. I heard a groan and, looking, saw Hugill lying flat upon his face.

"I got up and went across, cursing the frog. I thought Hugill had fainted. Then I got scared and called Sergeant Munyangombo. Hugill was dead."

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A MESSAGE FOR HAGGERTY

by Charles Wesley Sanders

Author of "The Odds Against," "Jackson's Last Run," etc.

"HAGGERTY is—" Donlin, conductor of fast freight-train First Section Eighty-Six, began.

"Aw, Haggerty," his engineer broke in. "Anybody'd think Haggerty was the only engineer on this here whole railroad. Just because he makes a loud noise ain't no sign he is better'n any of the rest of us. You'd think nobody ever pulled a throttle but this man Haggerty. It makes me sick the way you fellows kowtow to him."

"Oh, I wasn't talkin' to you," Donlin retorted. "I was talkin' to this new flagman. Haggerty told me over at Alton that he would be comin' with his back humped up. I want this man to go back and flag."

"What would you expect him to do—go back and do a clog-dance in the cinders? Let's get out of here. Five is comin'."

Five was a westbound passenger-train, and to clear for it they had had to go in at this station and wait twenty minutes. Their second section had caught up with them at the first station west, where both trains had been stopped for orders. Haggerty had voiced his warning there. The first section had pulled out. Haggerty had started to follow within the legal five minutes, but his conductor had discovered a hot-box. By the time they had set out the car, they had not time enough to come to this station against the passenger-train.

But the first section had to set out a car at Freshwater, the next station to the east, and, if Haggerty came like Jimmy-the-Wind, he would be on their heels before they got their switching done.

While Donlin and the engineer had their verbal duel, Tomlinson, the new flagman, stood at attention. Donlin now turned to him.

"This here Haggerty wheels 'em fast," Donlin said. "He won't be lookin' for us to stop at Freshwater. You go 'way back for him. And don't let this moonlight fool you. I expect you to go as far back on a nice night as on a stormy one. You get Haggerty stopped good and clean. Hear me?"

"All right," Tomlinson answered.

"You make sure that your lantern is burnin' bright and that you got torpedoes with you," Donlin added as the train began to move.

Tomlinson smiled a little to himself as he caught a handhold and climbed up on a box car. He guessed he would go back for Haggerty. He had seen Haggerty's kind before. The engineer was a type of railroader on whom a flagman wouldn't take a chance.

He could picture Haggerty easily enough: big, short-tempered, eager, courageous to the point of recklessness, a man whose creed was to "get 'em over the road."

Scraps of information he had picked up through overhearing conversation helped Tomlinson in his visualization. Men criticized Haggerty a good deal, just as this engineer had criticized him. Tomlinson gathered that Haggerty was abrupt in manner and ambitious to make a better

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showing in his running time than the other engineers. Haggerty, Tomlinson did not doubt, loved his business. He got a little the best of it from the dispatchers in the matter of meet-orders and time-orders, because he rarely failed to make the time given him. He was all man and all engineer all the time, Tomlinson supposed.

So, with an eagerness which matched Haggerty's own, Tomlinson half ran back along the track when his train stopped at Freshwater. It was midnight now, and above his head the full moon hung in an unflecked sky. Throughout the heavens there was the glitter of millions of low-hung stars. Tomlinson could see far back along the track.

He continued on his hasty way till his caboose was a quarter of a mile from him. Then he stopped and listened. There was no sound on the still night air except the exhaust of the engine up ahead of his train as the engine moved to set out the car.

Tomlinson stood in the center of the track with his lantern in the crook of his arm. He had torpedoes in his pocket, but the rules did not call for their use on this bright night. The swung lantern would suffice.

Tomlinson stopped and let the lantern slip down to his hand.

"There, Mr. 'Hump-'em' Haggerty," he said, "if you get by me now, it'll be because you're dead."

The flagman was perfectly satisfied that everything was all right. He was the more satisfied because he was flagging a man like Haggerty. It had been the flagman's experience that these fast runners were always alert. They watched for signals more closely than slower men, and they picked up those signals more quickly.

Tomlinson was glad that Donlin had told him Haggerty was on this run. He had a feeling of security which he would not have had if the engineer had been any one but Haggerty. For Tomlinson was determined that there should be no flaw in his work. He wanted a conductor's job for himself as soon as he could get it. He must keep off the dreaded "carpet."

He stood there in the silver moonlight for five minutes, his eyes fixed on the spot where he would presently discern the headlight of Haggerty's engine when the engine rounded a faraway curve. Haggerty would have plenty of time to see his signal.

AT THE end of the five minutes there was a faint glow against the trees which clustered beyond the right-of-way just at the spot which Tomlinson had been watching. The glow grew. Then the headlight came around the curve. Tomlinson could clearly make out the big engine and the box cars following it.

"He sure can wheel 'em—and is," Tomlinson told himself, "but he's got oceans of time."

He began to swing his lantern across the track at his knees in a stop-signal which he was sure the alert Haggerty would not fail to see. Every second he expected the engine whistle to screech an acknowledgment. But the minutes passed, and there was no such acknowledgment.

"Mebbe he's a fresh guy at that," the flagman told himself. "Mebbe he won't give me a whistle. Just grind to a stop about here."

He stepped to his left so that he would be to the right of the engine as the engine came on. Haggerty would be sitting up there on the right-hand side. He must see the signal.

But still there was no slackening of the speed of the train. Tomlinson had a cold moment during which doubt swept through him. What was the matter with Haggerty? The flagman glanced rather dully down at the lantern which he was swinging. Its flame was clear, and its red globe made a signal which could be seen a long way off on a night like this.

"Great guns!" Tomlinson ejaculated. "He's tearin' right down on me. What can be the matter with him?"

The engine was tearing down on him with sixty heavily loaded cars behind it. If Haggerty didn't shut off his steam and clap on his air before a minute had passed, there would be no stopping of that long train before the engine crashed into the caboose of the first section.

Holding his lantern aloft, Tomlinson knelt and fastened a torpedo to the track with his free hand. When the drivers of Haggerty's engine exploded it, it would make an additional stop signal. But it would come too late, the flagman foresaw. Haggerty could not stop between the torpedo and the caboose.

As Tomlinson came to an upright position, the train was only a few hundred feet from him. The next instant he had to

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spring from the track. The engine thundered by him, and the heavy cars followed. The engine's drivers had exploded the torpedo.

"Haggerty!" Tomlinson screamed in despair. "What's the matter with you? Best runner on the road! Best ——! You're a —— fool."

He had spoken this while the cab had rushed past him. He saw Haggerty suddenly reach for his levers. The engineer was staring straight ahead of him. He seemed to be having a confused and startled moment. Tomlinson waited for the grinding of the bar-brakes on the wheels as Haggerty pushed his air-lever to emergency. But twenty cars passed before the brakes were set.

The train, of its own momentum, slid on. Tomlinson waited, his teeth locked, one hand in a knot as his side, the other clutching the lantern.

Then there was a splintering crash forward. The cars in front of the flagman began to buckle and upend.

As Tomlinson ran back out of harm's way, he glimpsed a figure rising from the ground just behind Haggerty's engine.

"Jumped," said Tomlinson to himself. "Hope the fireman did, too."

He started toward the head end of the train. He passed cars which had jumped the track or had tried to climb over each other because of the abruptness of the stop.

IN A moment he was within ten feet of Haggerty. Haggerty had not heard him approaching. He stopped and studied Haggerty in the bright moonlight.

The flagman's heart sank. In spite of the fact that Haggerty had faced death or terrible injury just now, he was standing there with as much evidence of self-reliance in his air as if he had just descended from his engine at a terminal.

There was no sign of guilt in the way Haggerty bore himself. He looked like anything but a man who had just run by a stop-signal and had caused a wreck. He was coolly mopping his forehead with a big blue handkerchief, and Tomlinson saw that blood was trickling from beneath his cap. Tomlinson thought he fully realized then the kind of man Haggerty was. He was master of himself in any emergency. And he was ruthless. At any cost he would protect himself and his reputation. And what chance had a newcomer on the road with a veteran? When the inquisitors got busy up there in the terminal office, wouldn't they take Haggerty's word? Well, rather!

Tomlinson had nerve himself, but now timidity chilled him. He advanced slowly till he reached the engineer's side.

"Hurt much?" he asked.

"No," Haggerty said, turning bright eyes on the flagman.

He was a square-faced man with a big nose and a big mouth and those piercing, defiant eyes. A strong man, without a streak of sentiment in him.

"Fireman jump?" Tomlinson asked.

"Yes. He got out before I did. Here he comes now."

Tomlinson stood staring at Haggerty. He wanted Haggerty to speak the first explanatory word. But he was very sure that Haggerty would not do that. A grim, forbidding expression was growing on Haggerty's face.

The fireman joined them. Haggerty faced about so that he confronted the flagman. There was a thin smile on his lips, a cruel smile, Tomlinson thought.

"What the —— kind of flaggin' do you call that?" he asked. "Why didn't you swing us down?"

"I did," said Tomlinson.

"You're lying, boy," Haggerty said coldly. "You can't get away with it."

If Haggerty had burst forth in anger, Tomlinson could have found relief in anger of his own. But he felt helpless against the cold self-possession which Haggerty displayed. The flagman's lean face paled, and his lips twitched. He turned to the fireman.

"Didn't you see my lantern?" he pleaded.

"I was fixin' my fire," the fireman answered.

"You heard the torpedo?"

"Yeh. Too late."

"What'd you do then?"

Haggerty laughed harshly.

"Who're you puttin' on the carpet, boy?" he asked insultingly. "I guess the super will be wantin' all of us to answer a few questions tomorrow. We'll all be up in the office. You better save your breath."

Tomlinson had a moment during which he appeared to debate with himself. Haggerty seemed to read what was passing in his

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mind. Haggerty leaned forward from the hips.

"You're thinkin' you'd like to take a smash at me, aren't you?" he asked. "Well, you better put that think away down deep where it won't bother you. If you want a fight, you can get it—right now, too."

Tomlinson had had that notion that he would smash his fist into Haggerty's face. But he controlled himself. Fighting would do him no good. It would only call for more explanations when they were all on the carpet. Besides he doubtless would be hurt by the massive man in front of him. Haggerty, he perceived, was many things besides a good runner. He was a bully, and he was a coward—a moral coward.

Tomlinson turned away from the two men with a sigh. The movement brought him face to face with his conductor.

"Well, you flagged 'em, didn't you?" Donlin cried. "You flagged 'em! Yeh. Like —— you did. You let 'em by you, and they went all over the right of way. Didn't I tell you Haggerty would be comin' with his back humped up? Didn't I tell you that? Answer me."

"You told me," Tomlinson agreed.

"An' you fell down on the job," Donlin cried in his highest, thinnest voice. "You fell down on flaggin' the easiest man they is on this railroad to flag. Haggerty, a man with an eye that can see a lantern a mile off. The best runner on the road. Don't you offer me no excuse. Haggerty wouldn't run by a stop signal on a night like this.

"Damnation, get out of my sight. I've sent for the wrecker. You step aside and let real men do what's to be done. Say—" he leaned forward and peered up at Tomlinson with hot eyes—"don't you try to skip out. You got to face the music. If you skip out, me and Haggerty will spend every cent we've saved to land you. Ain't that right, Haggerty?"

"He won't skip out," Haggerty sneered. "He hasn't got nerve or sense enough to skip out."

When the wrecker came, Tomlinson stepped aside and let real men do the work. The wreck was not a difficult one to clear up. Haggerty's use of the emergency air had slackened the speed of the train. Long before daylight the relief crew had the wrecked cars weeded out and the trains patched up so that they could proceed.

Donlin had deposed Tomlinson. The flagman sat in the caboose with his head in his hands. He felt as if he should be angry, but no anger came. He was bewildered by the trap in which he found himself caught. Haggerty's word against his! And Haggerty would lie in that cold, harsh way of his. He would lie to protect himself. He wouldn't care what became of Tomlinson.

Wasn't there some way to reach the honesty that must be in his heart, however deep, Tomlinson wondered. Surely he was not all brute. No man was. Tomlinson determined to appeal to the engineer.

WHEN they reached the terminal, Tomlinson left the caboose and hurried over to the roundhouse. He waited till he caught sight of Haggerty. Haggerty would have passed him, but he laid a hand on Haggerty's arm. Haggerty stopped and looked at the flagman out of his disconcertingly cold eyes.

"I won't keep you a minute, Haggerty," Tomlinson said. "I want just a word with you."

"Well, let's have it," Haggerty said. "And take your hand off my arm."

Tomlinson removed his hand, but his eyes and lips hardened to meet the hardness that was in Haggerty's expression. It was as if they measured each other's strength as they stood there.

"Walk along with me," Tomlinson said after a moment. "I want to tell you something."

Haggerty, again with that harsh, impatient laugh of his, fell into step with the flagman. They walked some distance till they came to a little park.

"Will you sit down here?" Tomlinson asked.

"I haven't have had my breakfast yet," Haggerty said. "Don't keep me."

They sat down, and Tomlinson removed his cap and ran his hand through his hair. Haggerty had not had a good look at him before. He had called the flagman "boy," and he had thought he was no more than a boy. But Haggerty saw now that Tomlinson's face was stamped with something which the face of youth should never bear. He wondered what had brought the very distinct crow's-feet about Tomlinson's eyes. Tomlinson couldn't be more than twenty-five or twenty-six, Haggerty judged.

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Haggerty felt some curiosity about the young man. By removing his cap and revealing his face, Tomlinson had gained Haggerty's interest more quickly than he could have done in any other way.

The flagman began to speak in a low voice:

"Haggerty, I was workin' in the West up to two years ago. I was flaggin' out there on a reg'lar run. In a storm one night I let a train get by me. I'd been up the night before—had been without sleep for thirty-six hours. It was a bad wreck, but nobody was hurt. I've never stopped thankin' God for that."

"You've kind of got the habit of lettin' 'em get by you, haven't you?" Haggerty asked cynically.

"I've never told this to any one here in the East," Tomlinson went on. "I'm tellin' it to you to see what you'll think of it. I lost my job, Haggerty, and I went out into the world without a clearance.

"I had been all right up to that night, but, of course, they couldn't give me a clean card. I had to start all over again. I had been married the year before, and my wife was sick at the time. The reason I had been without sleep was because I had been sittin' up with her. You know, a flagman's pay don't go so very far, and I couldn't afford a reg'lar nurse. The best I could do was to have a neighbor woman in while I was out on the road and do the rest myself when I was in. There had been a week when I hadn't slept much.

"Well, Haggerty, I had to start 'way down at the foot of the ladder. I sold everything I had, and, my wife gettin' better, I come East. I had no clearance; I had to take what I could get. First I went to work at the coal dock, shovelin' slag with the hunkeys. You know what that pay is. But I hung to the job like grim death. I guess I give them the best coal-dock service they ever had.

"But it was one solid year before the coal-dock foreman noticed me. It wasn't a very good year for me and my wife, Haggerty. We been livin' in a shack over in shantytown."

Tomlinson stopped and looked suddenly at Haggerty. Was that a look of sympathy which slipped from Haggerty's face as he felt Tomlinson's eyes on him? Tomlinson couldn't tell. He hoped so, but the hope was immediately dispelled by Haggerty's words.

"I expected you'd hand me some such stuff as this," Haggerty said. "By ——, I never seen a welcher yet that wouldn't try to hide behind a woman's skirts. All men has their troubles. You ain't alone in that. But men bears their troubles without whimperin'."

"I'm not whimperin'," Tomlinson said.

He controlled his voice with difficulty, for he was torn between a desire to fling himself on Haggerty and a desire to impress on Haggerty the seriousness of his situation.

"Well, what're you tellin' me all this for?" Haggerty demanded. "What is it to me?"

"It's just what you make it," said Tomlinson. "I don't care about myself, but I got the finest wife a man ever had. She's stood by me without ever a murmur of complaint. If I lose my job, it's goin' to be hard on her. With the dock foreman's help I clumb out of the cinder pit to this job as flagman. I want to keep it."

"Aw, how do you expect to keep any job when you let 'em get by you?" Haggerty asked.

"There's a way," said Tomlinson.

They sat in silence. The flagman felt that this was a duel of their wills. He had somehow to impose his will on Haggerty. He had to make Haggerty see his case as he himself saw it. Fleetingly, bitterly he wished it were merely a duel of strength. He would not plead then.

But Haggerty seemed unmoved by Tomlinson's sad recital. He came erect with his big head up. His mouth was settled in the lines of cruel determination. There was no sign of relenting about him.

"I don't see that all this is gettin' us anywheres," he stated. "I'm goin' home. I'm hungry for my meal."

He took exactly five steps while Tomlinson watched him with fiery eyes. As Haggerty lifted a foot for the sixth step, the good that was in him stirred in his heart. He let the foot fall where it had been. He was going to turn. He did not know just what he was going to say to Tomlinson, but he was reacting under an honest impulse.

Tomlinson killed the impulse. He thought that Haggerty was definitely leaving him. Red anger surged up through the flagman then. He got to his feet.

"Haggerty!"

The tone stung Haggerty. He wheeled about.

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"Well," he challenged in a low, icy voice.

"You take it one way or the other," Tomlinson ground out. "You take it fair and good the way I'm handin' it to you, or you take it the other way after the meetin' tomorrow."

Haggerty walked back to him. Haggerty's face was working now. Passion was ruling him. He had never sought escape from a fight. He guessed not! And he had never been driven by threats. Those only set him in his stubborn way.

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

"Just what I say. If I lose my job, if I have to go down into somebody's cinder-pit again, or if I have to do hunkeys' work anywhere, I'm goin' to have a full settlement with you, Haggerty."

"You are?" Haggerty sneered. "How?"

"I'll tear your heart out by the roots if you play double with me tomorrow," Tomlinson declared.

Fire flamed in Haggerty's eyes to match the fire in Tomlinson's own.

"My heart's right here back o' my ribs," he ground out. "You'll never get a better chance to tear it out. Do it now, you dirty blackguard."

Tomlinson's legs stiffened. His feet went firm beneath him. His right hand closed in a hard knot. The muscles on his lean arms tightened. He had no impulse but to send the fist crashing into Haggerty's face. Then the impulse died. He relaxed as swiftly as he had become tense.

As clearly as if she had been standing there with him, the face of his young wife rose before him. After all, it was more her fight than it was his. There were several hours before he would face the superintendent, and something might happen during those hours. He would have to give his wife her chance. He turned away without a word and started blindly toward shantytown.

"Hah," said Haggerty triumphantly. "You be at the super's office tomorrow, and we'll see who'll do the tearin'."

TOMLINSON was in the superintendent's office the next morning at ten o'clock, and Haggerty was there. The others in both crews were there, too, those who were not guilty as nervous as if they had been so.

All of them sat in silence except Haggerty. When he had come into the outer office, his grim smile was still on his lips. It remained there as he walked around the room with long strides. Tomlinson looked at him curiously. Tomlinson seemed no longer angry. Dignity sat upon him simply.

At last Haggerty brought up at a window. Tomlinson felt the engineer's eyes on his face. Haggerty crooked a finger, and Tomlinson, after a moment of hesitation, went over to him.

"You still in that tearin' mood of yours?" Haggerty asked defiantly. "You seem kind of tame this mornin'."

Tomlinson looked at him. In spite of his air of bravado, Haggerty's face had weary lines in it. Tomlinson hadn't noticed those lines before.

"If I had only myself to think about, Haggerty," Tomlinson said calmly, "I'd take you to this floor right now and choke the breath out of you. But I can't—now."

"How's that?" Haggerty asked.

Tomlinson stood looking down at the tracks for a moment before he spoke. Then he squared his shoulders and lifted his head.

"I'm going to show you just about what kind of a dirty pup you are, Haggerty," he said, still in that even tone. "Last night I tried to keep this thing from my wife. But it was no go. She always knows when the least thing is wrong with me. She was game about it, but in the night, when she thought I had fell asleep, I heard her cryin'. She wasn't cryin' for herself. She was cryin' for me. She'd live in shantytown the rest of her life and never complain, but she knew I was hard hit. She believed me when I said I was flaggin' you. When I seen the look that come into her eyes as I told her I was gettin' a raw deal, I lost my temper again. I told her if you didn't square me, I'd kill you. I'd have done it, too. She made me promise I wouldn't lay a finger on you. I got to keep that promise. But you can look me in the eye, Haggerty, and see if I wouldn't have made you pay if it hadn't been for her. Ah, Haggerty, you're a dirty houn' dawg, an' I hope to God that sometime a good, free man gets a chance at you. You got it comin' to you for bringin' grief to one of the best women that ever lived. You ——"

His voice died to a whisper.

As he finished, the door of the superintendent's office was opened. The superintendent's clerk stood on the threshold.

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"Tomlinson," he said crisply.

Tomlinson walked to the door with his head up. He'd do that much, anyhow. He was like a man who goes to his death knowing he is innocent of the thing of which he is accused.

As the clerk stood aside to let him pass, he felt a hand on his arm. He turned. Haggerty was at his side. There was a different look in Haggerty's eyes. It seemed to Tomlinson to be a look of relief.

"We'll just go in together, son," Haggerty said.

He pushed his way past Tomlinson and walked up to the superintendent's desk. Tomlinson, filled with wonder, followed him. The superintendent had been writing. He continued to write for a moment without looking up. When at last he raised his eyes, he looked at Haggerty in surprize.

"I didn't call you, Haggerty," he said.

"I called myself," said Haggerty heartily, and Tomlinson saw that even authority did not awe him. "I got a conundrum for you, Mr. Miller."

"Conundrum?" the superintendent said with a frown. "What's the joke, Haggerty?"

"There ain't no joke," said Haggerty. "The conundrum's this: what hurts a man most—to get it in the neck when he's got twenty clean years behind him or to get it in the neck when he's just makin' a fair start up the ladder?"

The superintendent was a grizzled veteran. He disliked the business in hand, and his first thought was that he wanted no nonsense.

"Never mind the conundrum, Haggerty," he said. "It may have interested you, but it doesn't interest me." Immediately he contradicted himself. "You look as if you hadn't slept last night. I suppose you were turning this conundrum over in your mind. Didn't you get an answer?"

"Well, I didn't," Haggerty said. "And this mornin' I got something else put up to me." He stopped and fingered the adhesive plaster on his forehead. "A man has got it into his head to tear my heart out by the roots," he went on. "All that kind of talk this side of —— couldn't move me, now, could it? Sh'd say not. But this mornin' this man lugs a woman into the thing—a good woman—more, a game woman. You can't get away from a fact like that, can you, Mr. Miller?"

"Hardly," the superintendent said.

"I laid awake all night thinkin' about my conundrum," said Haggerty. "This mornin' I passed it up. I hadn't slept none, but I knew what I was goin' to do. I was goin' to fight for myself. But, when I got up into the office out there, a woman come pleadin' to me to do the square thing. How you goin' to get away from a woman's pleadin'—a good, game woman's?"

"A woman?" the puzzled superintendent asked. "What woman?"

"A woman sendin'. a message to me through a man, though prob'ly neither of them knew it," said Haggerty. "So I says to myself fast as lightning: 'You got twenty years of good clean stuff behind you. Don't go shamin' them twenty years. Crown 'em. Crown 'em this day by doin' the absolutely square thing. And give another man a chance at the next twenty years that's comin'."

"You're talking in riddles, Haggerty," the superintendent said. "What're the facts?"

Haggerty drew himself up. The lines in his face seemed to deepen. His lips were hard-set. But his eyes were softer than Tomlinson had supposed they could possibly be.

"The facts, Mr. Miller," Haggerty said, "are that Tomlinson had a flag out for me, all right. The fireman didn't see it. He was fixin' his fire. I didn't see it neither. I think I heard the torpedo. I dunno. I was all mixed up when I reached for the throttle and the air."

He paused, and, in spite of the disgrace which he had to confess to, the softness in his eyes gave place to a look of shining pride.

"It was a funny thing for me to do, and you know it, Mr. Miller," he finished. "I was asleep in the cab."

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PARIAHS of PIPEROCK

by W. C. Tuttle

Author of "Alias Whispering White," "Local Option in Loco Land," etc.

THERE comes a time in the life of every danged man when his conscience hurts him and he wishes to make restitution. Murderers have handed themselves over to the law, and burglars have been knowed to send back the proceeds of their burgling on account of them same twinges of conscience.

Sometimes it's only a statement made in the time of anger that hurts a man's insides and sends him back to square up.

That was the way with me and "Dirty Shirt" Jones. Me and him left the city of Piperock in anger of mind and agony of body; left the whole blamed county of Yaller Rock, for that matter. Piperock ain't so bad itself. She's a lot like the feller said about the heated hereafter—

"Hell ain't so bad itself—it's the people who live there."

Me and Dirty participated in a local option campaign in Piperock, the same of which affects the whole county. In the interests of parched humanity we puts our best foot forward, and somebody proceeds to kick it out from under us. Thereupon we holds up our clenched fists and swore by the horns on the moon that we're all through, finished and done with anything pertaining to Piperock or the county in which she lies.

That is September. We points our four burros away from there until we're safe from our friends.

Cometh November. Me and Dirty are humped over a fire, trying to make mulligan out of an ancient fool hen, when Dirty speaks thusly:

"Wonder what Magpie Simpkins will do for a job if 'Scenery' Sims is elected sheriff? When me and you didn't vote, Ike, local option becomes an issue. Be funny if Yaller Rock County goes dry by one vote."

Thus are seeds sown and bear fruit upon the green bay tree. That evening we're humped over the fire again. There ain't been a word said about it since noon, but we've thought a heap, I reckon.

"I reads something once," says Dirty reflective-like, "and she goes like this: 'Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their party.'"

"We answers them prophetic words in the morning, Dirty," says I.

"What party, Ike?"

"Well," says I, knowing whereof I speak, "it won't be no tea-party—not in Piperock, Mister Jones."

Going back was a simple matter. We knowed that somewhere under the north star lieth Piperock; so all we've got to do is to point properly, punch our burros and wear out our boots. Me and Dirty ain't got much to hold converse about, being as we've been together long enough to exhaust any lies we might have thought up, and the truth ain't of interest—when we do tell it.

We strikes the road which runs between Eagle and the rest of the world, and we points toward Eagle. About half an hour later we stops. Dirty is in the lead, and he walks back to me.

"Somebody lost a letter," says he, holding out an envelope. "Lost off the stage, I reckon, and got run over."

The address proclaims it to be the

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property of the Honorable Fitzhugh Peleg Alexander, Deer Lodge, Montana. She ain't never been opened.

"Honorable!" snorts Dirty, slipping his finger under the flap.

The contents seems of interest to him. He takes a deep breath and hands it to me. I deciphers it thusly:

DEAR SIR:

Our committee has decided to take up your offer to make our big temperance speech at Piperock. The evening before election will be about right. We will give you the fifty dollars after the speech.

Yours truly and respectfully,
WICK SMITH,
Chairman and Treasurer.

"What do you think of that?" I asks.

"Any old time they imports talent to dry up our homes, Ike, it's time for us to hurry back. Hump yourselves, you flea-bitten cousins to a rabbit!"

We enters the portals of Eagle after dark. Eagle is some hook-billed town if anybody rises to inquire. We irrigates our necks and has a bit to eat, and then we opines to outguess the wheel, the same of which wasn't hung on a spindle for no such purpose.

We ain't placed more than a couple of bets when in comes a individual who roars like a bull-fiddle, slaps a twenty-dollar gold piece on the layout and howls:

"Let her spin, feller! That's what is left of my gun."

He sees the dealer pay a couple of piker bets and rake in his twenty.

He stands there sort of in a trance and watches the wheel spin gold for the house.

"You got a system?" asks Dirty Shirt, and the big feller stares at him.

"System? On that wheel? That wheel has got any system on earth hog-tied and staked out!"

"Meaning which?" snaps the gambler, and the crowd splits.

The big feller is leaning with his hands on the back of a chair. When he straightens up, he brings the chair up.

"Meaning," says he, grinning, "that the law of averages was fixed by you before you opened the game."

He whirls that chair across the layout and crowns the gambler complete. The gambler goes over backward with the layout, wheel and all on top of him, the same being assisted by me and Dirty Shirt. There is silence for a [illegible] then Dirty says—

"I feel the need of an eclipse."

His first shot busts the big la[illegible] in the center of the room, and, before the flying glass hits the ceiling, he plants another slug into the lamp over the bar, and we has that eclipse.

As old Prof. Phinney would say, "Things got sort of ki-otic." A slug of somebody's lead dusted the dandruff on my head but missed my hat, for the simple reason that I had it in my hand. I'm so polite that I always takes off my hat in the presence of the dead. Nobody is dead yet, but the indications are favorable.

Seems like everybody is exercising their gun rights; so I points toward the door, shoots twice straight ahead to guarantee an open trail and don't stop hopping until I'm at that hitch-rack, mingling with Dirty Shirt and the burros.

We don't stop to apologize to anybody. About three miles out we makes camp, and, about the time we gets coffee to boiling, who comes angling in but the feller who threw the chair. He sets down and accepts a bite.

"Cleaned?" asks Dirty, and the feller nods.

"Whiter than snow."

He's a hefty sort of a *hombre*, born about forty years ago, and he sure is endowed with vocal cords. He cusses Eagle back to the sixth generation and then passes around the bottle.

"Clean?" says he. "Gents, I ain't got nothing but my honor left. My horse is in hock; my saddle is gone, and all the satisfaction I got was to hang a chair on that gambler's head."

"What can you do?" asks Dirty.

"Anything short of murder."

"Can you talk like a orator?"

"Me? Go ahead."

"Listen," says Dirty, and then he opens up and tells this jasper all about Piperock.

Then he shows him that letter.

"You can earn that fifty, and me and Ike will give you twenty more."

"Is that so?" says I. "For why?"

"As a bonus to the Honorable Alexander for getting so drunk that he can't make that speech. *Sabe?* There will be a disappointed and disgusted crowd, and such will react in our favor."

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"But that letter says he don't get that money until after the speech," I argues.

"Hmm," muses Dirty. "Ike, am I good for fifty dollars?"

"Not as a investment in live stock," says I. "But your credit is."

"I ain't got a cent," says the feller. "How will I get there?"

Then me and Dirty assays ourselves and finds that twenty won't break us, and he promises to take the first stage north. He stays with us that night, plants himself beside the road the next morning, and about noon the stage passes us. Beside the driver is our alleged temperance talker, but he don't recognize us, which shows him to be cautious.

FOUR days from that ancient fool hen finds us poking through the Medicine Hills, which are the boundary-lines between Yaller Rock and Custer. We swings out on a big bluff where we can look down upon the town of Piperock. The sight of a feller's old home town always brings memories, and me and Dirty lingers there, gazing down upon the town of our past wrath.

We sees a tiny speck of a human being cross the street and get on a bronc. They whirls and goes out of town in a tiny cloud of dust, and up to our ears is wafted the faint snap of a shot.

"Danged good old town!" applauds Dirty. "Best little town on earth, Ike, and she ain't changed a bit."

"Sure looks peaceful," I agrees. "Let's slide down and hold a reunion."

When we hits the bottom of the hills, we meets "Mighty" Jones, who is riding through the mesquite. He stops and stares at us.

"You fellers back?" he asks.

"Well," says Dirty, "are you so in the habit of talking to yourself that you can't believe your eyes?"

"You've got a lot of gall!" declares Mighty. "Coming back to the town you throwed down last September. Fine pair of citizens! When I die from thirst, I'll think of you two, but prior to that I forgets you."

"I hope we'll be in your thoughts soon, Mighty," says Dirty.

"How are things coming, Mighty?" I asks. "You might tell us."

"Nope. When I can't speak cheerful, I keeps still. You fellers will find out things soon enough."

He lopes on. Me and Dirty looks at each other and then pilgrims on. The old town looks all right—externally. There's a bronc dozing at the rack in front of "Buck's" place, and Ricky Henderson is taking a *siesta* in front of his barber-shop. All looks serene; so we ties up our rolling-stock and enters the saloon.

Buck is standing behind the bar, but somehow there don't seem to be no welcome in his eyes. We faces the mirror and elevates one hoof.

"Little touch of hooch, Buck," grins Dirty, but Buck shakes his head.

"Nope," he says and points at a sign on the wall. We peers closer and sees this:

To Whom It May Concern:

Resolved, that Ike Harper and Dirty Shirt Jones, them same being part and parcel of our past history, are hereby declared null and void as far as we are concerned. Them two has violated the principles of liberty and justice, failed in their duty to mankind and are hereby declared pariahs and outcasts in Piperock. Resolution framed by Judge Steele and signed by the following Republicans in good order:

Magpie Simpkins
Buck Masterson
Mighty Jones
Doughgod Smith
Ricky Henderson
Samuel Holt

"Whyfor cometh all this boycotting, Buck?" asks Dirty.

"You two failed to cast votes which would have put local option into the discard," says he, solemn-like. "You're *hyas cultus* around here."

"No drinks?" I asks, and he shakes his head.

"O Death, where is thy stinger?" says Dirty dry-like, and we sets down.

"What did you fellers come back here for?" asks Buck. "You ain't got no friends left nor nothing."

Just then old Judge Steele comes in, wiping his brow, and buys himself a jolt of jiggle juice, but he don't even seem to see us.

"How's law and justice nowadays, Judge?" asks Dirty.

The old pelican stares at us like he'd never seen us before.

"Has somebody brought sneep into our fair land, Buck?" he asks.

"Looks thataway, Judge," admits Buck

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sad-like. "Things is changing every day. Ain't like the good old days."

"Ain't it so!" says the judge. "When we can't go to the dogs fast enough, the dogs comes to us, Buck."

"Listen!" Dirty slides sidewise so his gun is handy. "You pair of slop-headed snake-hunters think you're smart, don't you? Me and Ike felt that Piperock needed us, and we came back. We're here, and we're here to stay. Hear me holler?"

"If we don't, we soon will," admits Buck.

Me and Dirty walks out of there and slams the door. We're sore. Dirty is sorer than I am, 'cause he loses all caution and kicks that Lodestone burro in the south end, the same of which reacts upon him. He picks himself up and limps over to the sidewalk.

"Dang it all!" he wails. "Somebody has been talking to them burros."

"I'm going to talk to Magpie," says I. "He'll understand."

If he did, he didn't show it. That long, lean, sorrowful-looking *hombre* never even took his boots off the table when we came in—and I've been his pardner for years. All he done was to hitch his belt around so his gun rests in his lap and go on spelling out a reward notice.

"Ain't you got no bowels of compassion?" I asks, and I put quarts of tears into that question.

He marks the place with his finger and peers at me.

"Not a gut!" he snaps and goes on reading.

"How does your chances look, Magpie?" asks Dirty.

"Good a minute ago—rotten now."

We sets there for a while, and then I asks—

"How's chances for local option to lose?"

"Same as mine to win—now." And he goes on spelling words.

"Must figure us to be Joners," opines Dirty sad-like.

"Joner was swallered by a whale," says I.

"That's the —— of it," says Magpie; "we ain't got no whales."

"Want me to tell you what I think?" asks Dirty. "Do you?"

"Nope." Magpie shakes his head. "Our thoughts has got yours beat sixteen ways from the jack if you thought steady all your life; so you might as well save your teeth, tongue and wind."

"Does them sentiments cover me?" I asks.

"I spoke collectively," says he. "You don't need to close the door."

We went out and sat on the sidewalk for a while. Then we happens to notice Ricky Henderson.

"By cripes, I'm going to get a shave and hair-cut," says Dirty.

So we both went over. Ricky yawns and looks at us.

"How's the old razor working, Ricky?" I asks.

"All right, I reckon," says he indifferent-like.

"We'll stand a few slices," grins Dirty. "Set us out two shaves and a couple of hair-cuts."

"Not today," says Ricky. "Come around Friday."

"Why Friday?" I asks.

"Closed on account of election."

"Today ain't election day."

"No," says he, "but Friday is."

ME AND Dirty lets this soak in for a while, and then we walks across to Sam Holt's hotel. We ain't had no dinner, and we hankers for a lot of ham and eggs. Old Sam meets us in the dining-room, but he don't grin like he used to.

"Howdy, Samuel," says I. "Can the Chink rustle us some ham and eggs?"

Old Sam shakes his head.

"Nope. Far as you fellers are concerned, that pig ain't been killed yet, and the chickens are all setting."

We walks out of there and perches on a hitch-rack like a pair of hairy old buzzards which have been cheated out of a feed.

"Ike," says Dirty, "did you ever hear the story about the feller who went into a dance-hall? He was full of hooch. Well, the manager took him by the arm and led him outside, but the feller went back again. The manager throwed him out the next time, but he went back. This time the manager kicked him out and kicked him plumb across the street. Somebody says, 'Going in again?'

" 'Again?' says he. 'Me? Think I'm a danged fool? I know when I ain't wanted.' "

"They ain't kicked us out yet, Dirty," says I.

"No," agrees Dirty. "But the manager didn't kick the feller out the first time either, Ike."

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Then cometh Mrs. Wick Smith. She waddles, talks hoarse and has a lot of trouble keeping her waist buttoned in the back. She toddles up and looks us over.

"Back again, eh?" says she. "Going to help us again? We need help."

"So do we," nods Dirty.

"We're going to give a sociable in the Mint Hall tonight and have a big time. Political temperance speech and charades—you like charades?"

"I don't," says Dirty, "although I'm hungry enough to eat mostly any of them Mexican dishes. For why is the sociable?"

"Campaign fund. We hired the Honorable Fitzhugh Peleg Alexander to make our big temperance speech. Sent clear to Deer Lodge for him. Fine talker. Was sent to the Legislature from Sagebrush County in 1899. Remember him, don't you? He tried to pass a bill making sheep-herding a misdemeanor."

"Anything new in the political field?" asks Dirty.

"Well," says she hoarse-like, "it has been hot in spots. Scenery Sims and 'Hassayampa' Harris has been stumping the county together."

"And lived?" I asks. "Nobody kill 'em?"

"Not exactly. Nobody is sure whether it was intentional or not. Down at Paradise Scenery was making a speech, when Chuck Warner's six-shooter exploded and cut Scenery's handkerchief right off his neck. Chuck said that Scenery's oration made him feel so melancholy that he tried to commit suicide, but the gun went off accidental.

"Curlew applauded Hassayampa by hammering on the seats with their guns, and, when Hassayampa recovered, he found the remains of a bullet imbedded in his watch and the top of his ear burnt off. Outside of that there ain't been no prominent folks shot at."

"Ike," says Dirty as Mrs. Smith waddles away, "this country ain't lost yet. There is still a slumbering spirit left, and maybe we can fan her into flame. We're outlaws—me and you. We've soured on them Republican stummicks, and they don't hanker for us no more.

"Them *hombres* proclaim us to be fourteen carats of Democracy. Ain't they outcast us? Ain't they barred us from the flesh-pots? Ain't they?"

"I won't argue against it, Dirty."

"I'm going to turn mean, Ike. In my eyes comes the look of a killer."

"Make it four eyes and I'll wear two, Dirty. But we still stand good with prohibition, don't we?"

"How so?" squeaks a voice behind us, and we turns to see Scenery Sims.

Me and Dirty gazes upon that little shrimp in chaparejos.

"How so?" parrots Dirty. "Ain't we helped you a lot?"

"Helped?" he squeaks. "You can't pull no wool over my eyes—you two. Them crooked Republicans got you back here for a purpose. Judge Steele just the same as admitted it, and, when I accused Magpie of the same thing, he just grins and tells me that I'm hard to fool. You can't fool Lindhardt Cadwallader Sims, y'betcha you can't! I'm going to put them local optionists wise. *Sabe?*"

And he goes toddling across the street, hunching up his shoulders and elbows like he was riding a trotting horse.

"Home, ho-o-o-o-ome, sweet, sweet ho-o-o-o-ome," sings Dirty sad and low. "Ike, it's like dodging a sidewinder and stepping on a Gila monster."

Then "Polecat" Perkins ties his bronc and comes over to us.

"You saved me a trip out to your place, Polecat," says Dirty, stepping around until Polecat is down-wind from him.

"Whyfor, Dirty?"

"Ain't you heard? Ain't you heard that if Hassayampa Harris is elected to the Legislature he's going to pass a bill making skunks a nuisance?"

"Is, eh?" Polecat masticates at top speed for a while. "Is, eh? Well, well! Let's all have a little drink."

"Not in there," says Dirty. "Buck is in favor of Hassayampa."

"His touch ain't contaminated sealed goods," says Polecat. "I'll buy a bottle, and we'll drink it out here."

He comes back with a quart in his hand and a grin on his face. He holds up the bottle, squints through it at the sun and says:

"We'll drink to ——"

Crash! Bang! We gets plentiful sprinkled with liquor and busted glass, and from the door of the saloon comes the whang of a gun. Polecat stands there, hanging on to the neck of that bottle.

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"——!" says Polecat.

"Under the circumstances that's as good a toast as any," says Dirty.

"I ain't got no gun with me," complains Polecat as he forks his bronc, "but, when I come again to this village, I'm coming heeled and in the proper frame of mind to resent all such maneuvers."

He rides away, shaking his head and still hanging on to the neck of that bottle. Me and Dirty humps up on that rack again and smokes to keep from getting too dry.

"Beg pardon, but I can't seem to place you two," says a voice behind us, and we crooks our necks to look at the Honorable Fitzhugh Peleg Alexander.

He's looking at us over a big pair of specs, one hand inside his vest like he'd been sleeping in a sheep camp and brought away something.

"You don't need to worry about placing us," says Dirty. "We're here."

"Who have I the honor of addressing?" he asks, and Dirty snorts:

"Honor, ——! Tell that to the natives and get lynched."

"Where did you get them clothes?" I asks, looking him over.

"There was an honest wheel in Paradise, and I bought 'em from the undertaker. Glad I ran across you, 'cause I need money."

"For what?" asks Dirty.

"Running expenses. I'm staying with 'Old Testament' Tilton, and he plays a danged stiff game of seven-up."

"Reckon we're going to stake you?" I asks.

"Have to," says he. "Otherwise I'll have to go."

"Feller like you hadn't ought to hock his gun," observes Dirty. "How was Jesse James when you left the gang?"

"Fifty dollars," says the feller absent-like, "was the price. Maybe you can find another man to take my place. Remember I've got to have enough to get awful drunk on to make the play right."

"Me and Ike ain't been treated right by our friends since we came," says Dirty. "We're outcasts of society, but I reckon we're strong enough to suffer for our principle. They'll make heroes out of us when they finds out the truth, Ike."

"Yes," says I, "but dead men don't appreciate applause."

"Wait, and I'll see what I can do," says Dirty.

HE DROPS off the rack and trots across the street to Wick Smith's store. He's in there about five minutes. Then he comes back and hands Honorable Alexander some bills. The feller looks at it, counts it over and walks on.

"Well, that's all over and settled, Ike," says Dirty relieved-like. "I was afraid that Wick might hate us too much to do business with me, but it was a bargain at fifty dollars."

"What did you sell, Dirty?" I asks.

"Them four burros."

"Our——"

I sets there and stares at Dirty Shirt, and then I looks over at the burros.

Lodestone and Pin Ear belongs to me body and soul, if a burro has any soul. I've had them two canaries ever since Sitting Bull sat down. Why, Lodestone is the champion kicker of the State, and Pin Ear is his pupil.

I looks down at Dirty Shirt, but my tongue won't speak. My temperature goes up to one hundred and thirty-five in the shade, and I drops off and takes Dirty Shirt Jones to my bosom. Right there in the main street of my old home town I clasps him unto me.

Man, I sure combed that *hombre* all the way, and he reciprocates to the best of his ability. We hugs each other laying down, standing up and spinning on our heads. Being as I can't see much, I don't know how the battle stands, but all to once I hears Magpie's voice:

"That's plenty! Don't kill him!"

"Good thing you spoke," says I. "I plumb forgot myself."

"I wasn't speaking to you, Ike," says Magpie, and I sets up.

Dirty is standing there, trying to put on two halves of his vest and hold on a pant-leg at the same time. Wick Smith is standing there at the hitch-rack beside the burros, grinning like a fool.

"Haw! Haw! Haw!" he whoops and slaps Lodestone on the rump.

I could kiss that burro for what he done. Wick lands about ten feet away, gets up, walks into the rack and falls on his face.

"Haw! Haw! Haw!" I whoops. "Me and that mule can whip the town."

"Whip ——!" yelps Dirty, picking up a rock. "You couldn't whip nobody!"

He hits Magpie right in the neck with that rock. Magpie sets down on the

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ground and begins to whistle something I've never heard before. Dirty looks foolish-like at him and weaves off across the street. I'm right behind him.

"Dirty," says I. "I apologize for licking you. That was a good shot."

"Like thunder!" he wails. "I aimed at you—dang your hide! Now I'll get arrested."

"And put in jail," says I, "and then your brother outcast will have to get some dynamite and blow you out."

"You let up on that dynamite talk!" he wails. "Where'd I be?"

"You wouldn't have any jail around you, Dirty."

"You let me be in jail," he howls. "Doggone you, don't you dynamite no jails what I'm in. Maybe I won't be in."

"Yes, you will," says I. "I'm going to have you arrested for selling burros what don't belong to you. *Sabe?*"

"If you do, I'll swear that you hired that *hombre* to speak for prohibition."

"That ain't nothing to jail a feller for," says I.

"Nope. Under the present administration you wouldn't live to get to a good, safe jail, Ike."

"That's them," squeaks a voice behind us, and we turns to see Scenery and Old Testament Tilton standing there looking at us. "Them are Republican spies and disturbers, Testament. They publically pulls off a fight to try and fool us."

"A wrath cometh that will cause the wicked to flee," says Old Testament piously-like. "They will talk in many tongues, and their temples will fall."

"I talk two now," says I, "United States and profane. I ain't got no temple, and I licked Dirty Shirt in public 'cause I didn't have time to take him out of sight."

"You licked me?" asks Dirty.

"Well, why argue about it," says I. "Everybody has a right to their own opinion."

"When I'm sheriff, I'm going to clean up!" squeaks Scenery.

"Good!" applauds Dirty. "I'd admire to see how you'd look, feller. If you get beat, you'll stay filthy, eh?"

"Far be it from me to ask anybody to go away," says Old Testament, "but it would be an act of kindness if you two would leave. Your game is knowed full well, and you ain't here for no good."

"We don't look like we was here for our health; that's a cinch," admits Dirty. "We don't ask for no fatted calves, but—ain't you got no hearts?"

"Hearts!" squeaks Scenery. "Why, dang your spying——"

Scenery got that far when Dirty kicked his feet out from under him, and he bit his tongue when he hit the dirt. He sets there nursing his tongue and shaking his head.

"Violence," says Testament, "don't figure in our program, but you bug-headed sheep in wolves' clothing are——"

Testament is a preacher of the Gospel. I've got lots of respect for a preaching preacher, but, when he steps out and calls me a sheep, I sort of classes him with human beings. Me and Dirty looks back when we've got to the corner, and Dirty says chiding-like:

"Suppose you should die tonight, Ike, and needed a Christian burial tomorrow. What do you reckon Old Testament would say over you?"

"He'd have to say something different than he said when he sat down on the ground just now, Dirty, 'cause them words ain't in no burial service I ever heard."

FROM force of habit we wanders over to Buck's place and sets down. Buck is building a solitaire layout and don't give us a second look. Pretty soon Dirty Shirt says—

"Buck, I know something you ought to hear."

"Yeah?" says Buck. "You're talking."

"Them prohibitionists has handed us a raw deal, Buck, and I don't figure me and Ike owes them any loyalty. They feeds the hand what bites 'em. Tomorrow there's going to be rough stuff pulled in Curlew. A bunch from Custer County is going to vote Dry. *Sabe?*"

"Illegal voters?" asks Buck interested-like.

"You heard enough, Buck. If you tell on me, I'll assassinate you."

"I'm wise," nods Buck. "Hassayampa's doings—dang him!"

Me and Dirty walks out and runs into Hassayampa. Dirty takes him to one side and whispers in his ear. Hassayampa gets interested a heap.

"Right here?" asks Hassayampa. "The gall of them jaspers! I'll go over to Wick's

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and get you fellers something to eat. Barred you from the hotel, eh?"

Mike Pelly rides in from Paradise, and me and Dirty goes over to see him. He ain't friendly, but his ears are open to talk.

"You can take it or leave it—suit yourself," says Dirty, "but between the hours of 8 A. M. and 8 P. M. there's going to be crooked work pulled off right here, Mike. None of my business what you do. *Sabe?*"

Mike nods and goes over to Buck's. Hassayampa brings us over some canned food, and we enjoys a big feed.

"Dirty," says I, "you're a awful, awful liar."

"Nobody believes the truth, Ike; so we might as well lie."

"What will it get for us?" I asks.

"Well, there's more belligerent votes among the Dries than there is among the Wets. When a man is looking for trouble, he ain't got time to vote, and—you ain't got brains enough to see six feet ahead."

"Go ahead and lie if it brings happiness to your penny-ante soul."

"I've been looking for you two," says Magpie Simpkins, and we turns to see him and Judge Steele beside us. "I arrests you both for assaulting a officer of the law."

Magpie is wearing his head cocked to one side like a startled fool hen.

"I tried to hit Ike with that rock," says Dirty.

"He's lying," says I. "He threw it right at you."

"Think I didn't know that?" snaps Magpie. "I just wanted to know which one of you it was. I'll take Dirty."

"Dead—maybe," nods Dirty. "Not alive, Magpie. That bow-legged Harper honyock says he'll dynamite the jail if I'm put in there."

"Dinnymiter, eh?" crows the judge, "Dinnymiter at heart, Magpie. Put him in."

"I've only got one cell, Judge. They'll fight."

"Let 'em," grins the old pelican. "We'll watch."

"Coming peaceful?" asks Magpie, and we nods.

He herds us across in front of Wick's store. Out comes Hassayampa, Scenery, and Wick.

"Get out of the way of the law!" yelps the old judge.

"Wait!" yells Hassayampa. "What is the arrest for, Magpie?"

"'Cause we're Dry," yells Dirty. "They wants to kill our votes."

"Starting their skulduggery already, eh?" grunts Wick. "Trying to cripple a worthy cause on the eve of its victory, eh?"

"We stands by our compatriots!" squeaks Scenery, and I know that Hassayampa has told 'em what Dirty told him.

Pete Gonyer has rode up beside us, and I sees Wick signal him something. Pete rides a few steps away, but I ain't got time to wonder about him.

"I arrests them two, and they're going to jail!" declares Magpie. "None of you drouthers are going to hinder me in the performance of my sworn duty, believe me."

I reckon Pete had the right idea. The play must 'a' been to get Magpie, but the loop was too big. I felt it rasp across my neck, I collides with Magpie, and we both left the ground. Then we lands on my back. I gets a fleeting look at things, and I sees that Pete is still in the saddle, but that rope has got around the bronc's hind legs and tail, the same of which aggravates it a heap.

Magpie seems to have got all my left ear in his teeth and is breathing hard through his nose. I starts in to address him on the evils of cannibalism, but I feels a tug at my heart-strings and we're off again. This time the bronc seems to have a definite object in view. Pete may be a local optionist, but that bronc didn't draw no liquor line, 'cause it bucked right through Buck's front door and across the corner of the pool-table, leaving me and Magpie half-way across the bar, with the saddle and all the slack rope tied around the stove.

I wiggles loose and falls behind the bar, the same of which deposits Magpie in front of the bar. I lit on something soft, which appears to be Buck Masterson, but I don't worry about him.

I've been shocked to such an extent that I hankers for courage. My neck ain't noways in line with my heels, but I decides to drink, anyway, and let it cut the curves. I grabs a bottle off the back-bar and deluges my throat with the contents. I took the first bottle I got hold of, and I found out right then that it pays to be particular. I never swallered so hard in all my life. I lifts up that bottle to see what I've absorbed. Then there comes a crash and that bottle seems to dissolve like a bad dream.

"I comes heeled this time," states a

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voice, and there is Polecat in the doorway with a gun in his hand. "Charge me a dollar a bottle and then shoot it out of my hand, will you!"

Polecat comes sneaking in and peers at me.

"——!" says he. "Wrong again."

"Polecat," says I, "will you look on the floor and see if you can find the label that was on that bottle?"

He looks around and finally picks up a sticky piece of paper and lays it on the bar.

"Is that what you drink?" asks Polecat wondering-like.

"That's what I drank," I admits.

"My ——!" says he. "You don't care if the country does go dry, do you? You can always get kerosene, Ike."

We hears a noise over by the pool-table. A pair of boots comes up, rests on top of the table, like the owner of them boots was trying to stand on his head. Buck has got to his feet and is leaning against me, making funny faces when he tries to talk. From the looks of Buck he must 'a' tried to keep that bronc out by main strength. He peers at them two feet on his table, and then he whispers hoarse-like:

"Can't you—you read? Keep one foot on the floor!"

The boots slid off the table, clumped when they hit the floor, and over the edge of the table comes Pete's face. He blinks at us like an owl.

"You—you ——" says Magpie's voice, and we turns to see him swaying just inside the door, trying to cock a gun. "You danged arid jassack!" he wails.

Pete nods his head and slides just below the table level as the gun explodes. Magpie made a good shot. He ain't no Buffalo Bill with a six-gun, and maybe he couldn't do it again, but that bullet busted right into the nail that holds the ball-rack, and that piece of furniture and sixteen pool balls comes down on top of Pete with a crash.

"*Sic semper tyrannis!*" grunts Magpie.

"My gosh!" grunts Polecat. "What a name for a dog! Magpie thinks he's herding sheep."

We sees Pete get up from behind that table, get up like he didn't have a care in the world. He's got lumps on his head until that member ain't noways shaped to hold a hat, and his clothes wouldn't bring a nickel in a rag house.

He pokes around the corner of the table and weaves straight past us and out of the door, and you can call me a liar if he ain't trying to take a bite out of a red pool ball.

"I—I ain't had a apple for ages," says Magpie peevish-like. "Not for ages and ages."

"Well," says Buck, "you might foller Pete; he won't eat it all."

Magpie nods and limps out of the door.

"Ike drank your kerosene, Buck," states Polecat.

"Kerosene?" Buck looks at Polecat and then at the back-bar.

"That bottle what was there?" he asks, and Polecat nods.

"Dang it!" snorts Buck. "I was trying a experiment, and now she's spoiled! I wanted to see if I could preserve a little snake in oil the same as you can in alcohol."

"Could you?" asks Polecat.

"I don't know," says Buck sad-like. "It's only been in there two weeks."

THAT kind of talk makes me sick. I goes outside and runs into old Judge Steele.

"You're still under arrest, Ike," says he positive-like. "The fact that Pete interferes with his rope don't lessen the fact that you're due to languish in durance vile. Too bad you snake-hunters——"

Thus ended the discourse. I'm from a peaceable family, and I hate a rumpus of any kind, but any old time they connects my name with snakes I forgets my breeding.

I'm mean when I gets mad, and I ain't responsible for what I do. Maybe it's a good thing them local optionists pulled us apart. Wick Smith chased the judge halfway home, while the rest of 'em led me inside the store, where quite a crowd is congregated.

"This is going to be a big night," states Hassayampa, who seems to be making a speech. "Word has been sent to our committees in Curlew and Paradise, and they will be on hand to figure out ways and means to combat the evil which confronts us. The stage is set; on with the dance, and let joy be unrefined."

"We can thank Mr. Jones for his timely confession," says Mrs. Smith.

"He has unmasked the liquor ring. Them snakes in the——"

I got up and limped right out of there. I'm only human. I limped all the way up to our shack and went in. Magpie is

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setting there on a box, oiling his gun, and he nods as I come in.

"Going to kill somebody?" I asks.

"Likely."

"Local?"

"Foreign."

"They're slick."

"Y'betcha, but we're slicker, Ike. We'll show them drouthers they can't fool with us. We're going to picket Curlew and Paradise from 6 A. M. to 6 P. M. tomorrow, and they'll do us no dirt. *Sabe?*"

"Can I lay me down to sleep, Magpie?" I asks. "I'm all in."

"I ain't never killed nobody in their sleep—yet," says he.

Just then comes a knock at the door, and Scenery Sims enters our abode. He squints at me and Magpie and squeaks:

"I just came to let you know that your nefarious schemes are known, Magpie Simpkins. We'll thwart you, dog-gone you; we will!"

"You'll say something pretty soon," says Magpie.

"Your spy system is played out and perished," says Scenery, waving his arms. "The machinery of the Republican party is full of monkey-wrenches and its wheels are rusting. Right will prevail, gents and ladies, and this land will be fairer than the lilies in the dell."

"You won't smell 'em," says Magpie slow-like. "They'll be over you, you squeaky little cousin to a chickadee! I'll give you ten seconds to get out the window. Hit the glass, Lindhardt!"

"I came in the door," says Scenery, "and I'm going——"

"Out of the window," says Magpie, "six, seven, eight, nine——"

Scenery went. The first bullet went into the floor under his feet, and he hopped four feet high and went through that window like a circus rider going through a hoop. As his heels disappear, comes the whang of Magpie's second shot, and the world seems to rise up and smite me on four sides at once.

I hears the gentle rain-drops pattering around me, and I sort of rises my head to take a look at the storm. Two more rain-drops fall beside me, and, when I claws the dirt out of my eyes so I can see, I finds that the last two drops consisted of our cook-stove and Magpie's chair. I looks at our shack and wonders aloud at what I see. Things sure have changed a lot around the old homestead.

Just then I sees a busted chair rise up and turn around several times before the party under it can get loose. Then he shucks a picture-frame off his neck and kicks the water-bucket off his right leg. Then he peers at me and says—

"Ike, have you got any lilies—of—the—dell?"

Magpie's mustache is all gone, and I wonder if his shirt eloped with his boot.

"No lilies," says I. "I'm about half out of flowers today. Would you mind telling me what kind of ammunition you use in that gun?"

He looks at the ruined home and rubs his dirty face.

"In the corner of the shack was forty pounds of dynamite, Ike, and I—I think maybe I hit it."

"The evidence is all in your favor," says I. "Where is Scenery?"

About thirty feet away from us lies the door of our shack, and as I asks the question that door seems to rise up a little and fall back. Then it rises up again, and somebody seems to get up behind it. Then it falls toward us, and standing there in the light of day is a woful-looking *hombre*. He looks like the breaking up of a hard Winter.

"I came visiting," says he weak-like. "I came visiting."

"Yes, yes," says I. "Proceed."

"I—I turned the knob," says he, like he was trying to remember something that happened long ago. "I turned the—" Then he stops. "My ——! I must be strong! I—I yanked that door so hard that it came off the hinges and lifted me plumb over here!"

"You hadn't ought to yank a door thataway, Dirty Shirt," chides Magpie. "Look what you done to our home."

Dirty looks at the remnants of the shack and then rubs his eyes.

"I can't stay," he whispers. "I—I just called—that's all."

And he weaves off toward town.

"Called ——!" grunts Magpie. "He never even seen my last raise, Ike."

We pilgrims up and looks at our shack. One end and all of the roof is in the discard. There's a hole about six feet deep near where the window used to be, and, as we peer down into it, a foolish face looks up at us and a voice squeaks:

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"Don't shoot! Dog-gone you, don't shoot again! I've got a headache."

"Didn't I give you ten seconds to get out?" asks Magpie. "What are you doing in my house again?"

"Oh!" Scenery peers around and crawls out. He peers around and nods. "I remember," says he. "I lit on my hands and knees, didn't I? And then the world raised up behind me, and I fell into the hole that it came out of."

He peers all around and digs some gravel out of his ears.

"I see it all now!" he yelps. "You tried to assassinate me! You— What are you looking for?"

"My gun," says Magpie, poking into the wreck. "Remember now that I only counted to nine. I beg your pardon, Mister Sims."

Scenery stumbled over a log and fell down, but he got right up and went toward town, talking to himself, and I went right behind him. Maybe I talked a little, too. A feller can't get blowed through the side of a house without having something to talk about.

THEN I meets Lodestone. Right in the middle of the road I meets that lovable burro. We rubs noses, and then I climbs on his back and rides up the road, where I runs into Dirty Shirt and Polecat. It is almost dark. Polecat hands me a bottle, the same of which is investigated by all of my senses before I imbibes.

"Me and Dirty has been appointed guards of honor, Ike," says Polecat. "We've been appointed to guard the ice cream."

"Does she need guards?" I asks.

"Sure," grins Polecat. "The local optionists have heard that the Republicans are going to steal it, and I volunteers to guard it with my life and Dirty's."

"Who told you they was going to steal it?" I asks.

"Dirty Shirt."

"It must be true then," says I.

Then I rode the burro over to Buck's rack and went inside the saloon. Curlew, Paradise and Piperock are well represented in there, and they talks some about the sociable.

"You fellers won't see none of it," says I. "You won't even be allowed in the hall."

"How do you know?" asks Mike Pelly.

"Dirty Shirt told me."

Then I went out and sat on the sidewalk across the street. Lodestone is the only friend I've got left, and he don't belong to me. The hall is lit up, and the local optionists are going in right along. Pretty soon here comes Dirty Shirt and sets down with me.

"Through being warden to a hunk of frozen milk?" I asks.

"Uh-huh. By golly, if we could only be there to see it, Ike! You'd— Look at the fire! Buck's saloon is on fire, Ike!"

From behind Buck's place comes flame and sparks, which proclaims it to be a regular honest-to-grandma house on fire.

Somebody runs out of the saloon, shoots into the air and yells at the top of his voice:

"Fire! Fire! Fire!"

Somebody else joins in the chorus, and that fire sure got advertised plenty.

It ain't often that us folks get to enjoy a regular fire, and the local optionists pour out of the hall like bees. The street is full of folks doing everything they can to hinder anybody from putting out the fire. Me and Dirty lopes to the pump and splashes water plentiful until they begins to arrive with everything from a barrel to a hat. All to once somebody comes galloping across the street, yelling:

"Brush-pile! Just a bonfire. Wasn't within fifty feet of the saloon."

"Gents—" Old Testament enters our midst. His hard hat has been drove plumb down around his neck, and the brim sticks out from his chin like he was trying to shade his neck. "Gents, it pains me to inform you that the opposition has captured the Mint Hall, barred the door and are proceeding to appease their insides with our provender."

"How do you know?" yelps Hassayampa, dropping a pail of water on his feet.

"I know," says Testament, "because they dumped me out of the second-story window."

"My ——!" gurgles Dirty, taking me by the arm. "Come away, Ike."

I follers him across the street.

"Whyfor the exclamation, Dirty?" I asks, peering across the street, where the crowd is milling around the door of the hall.

"Polecat hates Hassayampa," explains Dirty. "Polecat tells 'em that them Wets are going to steal the ice cream; so they deputizes us to guard it. We takes out the

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cream and the ice, Ike, and dumps it in a safe place, and then me and Polecat climbs into the rafters of the hall, and——"

Yeo-o-o-o-ow! *Bang! Bang! Crash!* Yeo-o-o-ow!

We sees the lights go out in the hall. Out of the windows and doors come hurrying men, and for the first time in history the Democrats and Republicans merge into one. They not only merge, but they seem to get very close to each other. Some of 'em comes our way, and I lopes over to the rack to get on Lodestone. He ain't fast, but he's the fastest I've got.

A bullet fans my ear, and I turns to shoot back—with the gun I ain't got—when somebody slams into me and we both goes down. I rolls over about six times before I can stop. Then I gets right up, hops on to that burro and digs him with my heels.

Lodestone is a noble steed. He feels the need of fast work and dashes away—to the end of the rope. Some danged fool had tied him to the rack. Me and that other jassack stands on our heads, and I reckon we both got up at the same time. That darn old rabbit humps up like he was sore at the whole world, and then that man I ran into gets up and staggers to his feet.

"Sus-sorry I can't make speech," says he thick-like. "Ha, ha, ha! Got money in advance, too. Ha, ha, ha! Paid twice. Thanks. Rotten campaign. Pleased to meet you."

The Honorable Alexander has been hit so hard that he ain't neither got sense nor caution. He haw-haws some more to himself and shakes hands with Lodestone's tail.

"Good night, gents," says he. "Lovely party."

"Good night and good-by," says I.

Just then Lodestone lifts his legs sort of jerky-like, and I turns away. Lodestone must 'a' been dazed a little, too, 'cause he kicked twice when once was sufficient.

I lights a match and looks at the feller. He squints cross-eyed at the match, and I know that he's had plenty. He's only got one sleeve of his coat on. I take it off and puts it on myself. All I've got left is one sleeve of my shirt, and I feel ashamed.

Then I herds Lodestone into the open door of the livery-stable, climbs up into the loft and goes to sleep on the hay. I don't know how long I slept, but I do know that the sun is shining through the cracks in the west side when I wake up.

I hears voices raised in argument and anger below me, but that don't mean nothing in Piperock. Sudden-like I sees the hay begin to rise, and out of that tangle of timothy comes the head of Dirty Shirt.

He nods to me and digs some foxtail out of his neck. Dirty looks like he had been hit in the face so many times that nothing short of bunion plasters would give him relief.

"Where did you get that coat?" he whispers.

I reaches inside the coat and hauls out a pocketbook and some old letters. I looks at 'em and hands 'em to Dirty Shirt. The epitaphs on the envelopes proclaim 'em to be for the Honorable Fitzhugh Peleg Alexander, Deer Lodge, Montana.

"He was him?" asks Dirty foolish-like.

"Is," says I. "Unless Lodestone hit him twice."

I opens the pocketbook, and she assays fifty dollars.

"Honorable," says I, "you're wrong; you only get paid once."

"Talking to yourself?" asks Dirty.

"Nope. But the feller I'm talking to can't hear me."

THEN we crawls over to the hay-hole and peers down. In the center of the room is a table and a box, and around the table sets old Sam Holt, Wick Smith, Ricky Henderson and "Jay Bird" Whittaker. Two Wets and two Dries. Each one of them election officials has a gun in front of him. Scattered around the room is representatives from abroad. Hassayampa Harris, "Sad" Samuels, "Weeping" Wilson, "Ace" Allison and "Half-Pint" Perkins from Curlew, and Cobalt Williams, Mike Pelly, Bill McFee, Andy Johnson, Art Miller, "Slim" Hawkins, Zeb Abernathy, Hank Padden and Abe Mudgett, all from Paradise.

We watches 'em for a while, and pretty soon Sam Holt says—

"The time grows late; I'll cast my vote."

He takes a ballot and enters a stall. When he comes back, Wick Smith gets up, takes a ballot and announces—

"I'm going to kill that vote."

When he comes back, Ricky Henderson shuffles his feet, picks up a ballot and says—"Wick, your vote is in the sere and yaller leaf."

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And he votes.

Jay Bird don't say anything. He just looks at Ricky and votes. No need for him to say a word. The vote now is fifty-fifty.

Things drag along for a while, and Chuck Warner rides in from Paradise.

"Any trouble down there?" asks Mike Pelly anxious-like.

"Nope." Chuck shakes his head and sets down.

Then cometh Pete Pelliser from Curlew. His bronc is lathered plentiful, and the contingent from Curlew crowds around him.

"How's she coming?" asks Hassayampa.

"Only six votes cast when I left," says Pete. "Ain't you fellers going to vote?"

"Not here," says Sam Holt. "This ain't their precinct."

Then that bunch of belligerents stands up and sees things in the right light. They've mistrusted each other to the extent that they forgets their duties as citizens—and it's too late to get back.

"How many votes cast in Paradise, Chuck?" yelps Mike.

"Not over twenty, and they're about fifty-fifty, Mike."

"My ——!" groans Mike. "And we was in the majority by two."

Just then old Sam Holt happens to look up and sees me and Dirty. He lets out a yelp that could be heard in Helena, and the whole bunch looks up at us.

"There's the winning votes!" whoops old Sam. "They turns the tide!"

"Come down," orders Mike Pelly. "Come down and save the country."

"For us!" whoops Hassayampa. "Come down, friends."

"We ain't going to vote," says Dirty. "We're pariahs. You boobs has all broke your picks with Dirty Shirt Jones, Ike Harper and so forth. We don't owe allegiance to nothing nor nobody. *Sabe?*"

Me and Dirty enjoys the spectacle below us. Neither side dares to shoot us; so we leans as far out as we can and chuckles to ourselves.

I never did find out who threw that rope, but I think it was Chuck. Anyway, it was somebody who was handy with a rope, 'cause they got us the first swipe. Then me and Dirty gets yanked off that hay, and a second later that table ceases to be a table and the ballot-box wouldn't hold rocks. Me and Dirty got walked upon in the events which followed.

They say that music hath charms to soothe the savage beasts, but every time I puckers my mouth to whistle somebody kicked me in the face. After a while the battle passes outside, and we has a chance to get rid of that rope.

Sam Holt's feet are sticking out from under the table, and I sees Wick rise up with a horse-collar around his neck and the rest of the harness drapin' his figure. Me and Dirty drags the table off old Sam, and he lays there, kicking his feet on the floor like he was internally disconnected.

"Wick," says I, "I want them burros back." I shoved that fifty into his unresisting hand. "Did you pay that speaker fifty dollars?"

"Uh-huh," he nods. "He—he didn't earn it though, and we chased him plumb over to Powder River to get it back, but he got away."

"What—do—you—want?" gasps old Sam, setting up.

"Want to vote," says I. "Can I?"

"Use—your—own—judgment," says Sam.

I sat down and marked a ballot. When I got through, Dirty marked one. Then we got up, walked to the back of the stable and herded our four burros out back, where our plunder was piled.

"Now—is—the—time—for—all—wise—men—to—look—out—for—themselves," says Dirty, pronouncing each word between yanks on a cinch.

We prods them burros out between the stable and the barber-shop and sees a big crowd in the street; so we herds 'em right back and goes around the other way.

"We don't care what the excitement is about, Ike," says Dirty. "Me and you have had about enough—I know I have."

"I'd like to have my old gun," says I. "I lost it when the shack blew up. Maybe we can find it, Dirty."

We went up there and hunted around in the dark for an hour—we can't find it; so we points them burros down the road and runs into Magpie. He stops and stares at us.

"Where's your bronc?" I asks.

"Somebody turned it loose!" he yelps.

"Did Scenery beat you?" asks Dirty.

"How do I know? I'm one vote behind, and Piperock to hear from. Local option is three behind and Piperock to hear from."

"Cinch," grins Dirty. "You get four votes in Piperock, Magpie."

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"Gents, I thank you. I—I reckon we misjudged you two, and I apologize. Come back to your old home town and enjoy the fullness thereof."

"Well," says Dirty, "we might take one shot for old times' sake."

We left the burros there and walked back with him. There's a crowd in Buck's place, and we horns right in. Magpie pushes his way to the bar and faces the crowd.

"Gents," says he, "let's celebrate our sweeping victory. We win."

"You do?" squeaks Scenery Sims. "You do not! I got an even break here, which places me by one vote, and local option went solid, which puts this county dry by one vote."

There is silence for a moment, and then Magpie's voice hits a high key—

"Did Sam Holt and Ricky Henderson throw us down?"

I slipped out of there, ducked around the corner and ran right into somebody coming the other way. We went down in a heap and fought out to the middle of the street. My antagonist grunts—

"Dang your soul, fight fair!"

I let loose of Dirty's ear, and we staggered to our feet. We limped around back of the saloon and sat down for a while until we gets our breath; then we gets up and pilgrims toward our burros. I don't *sabe* things at all, but I'm wise that there's been a hitch somewhere.

We walks up to the burros, and a familiar voice says—

"Dog-gone you, I've got you now, you pariah pups!"

Magpie's figure looms up from among our live stock. I sees the moonlight shine on the barrel of his gun, and I says my little prayer. He pushes a burro out of the way so he can have open shooting—but that burro was Lodestone. We propped Magpie up against a mesquite bush and hung his sombrero on the top so they'd find him, and then we points our cavalcade toward the north star again. We pokes along until we comes to the top of the big butte, from which we can see the lights of Piperock, and then we stops for a breathing spell.

"Dirty," says I, "you started to tell me what you and Polecat done to them ice-cream containers last night. What was it?"

"Hornets. Six big nests, Ike. We—we stung our friends. Our old friends."

"Old is the right word, Dirty. Anything else to tell me? How comes that only four votes showed up when we know of six that were cast?"

"I was too loyal to my friends, I reckon, Ike. Remember when we busted that ballot-box? Well, when I put our votes in, I took out two so as to make it a cinch. I—I reckon I— Well, Ike, I figured on taking the Dry votes, but I reckon I got the wrong two."

"Where are they?" I asks. "Can't we take 'em back?"

"I didn't dare to keep 'em, Ike; so I—I fed 'em to Lodestone."

I took a quart of perfectly good whisky out of my pocket and held it up.

"Dirty," says I, "being as we've got a long dry spell ahead of us, I reckon we might as well start now by busting this on a rock."

"My gosh! Don't do that, Ike. Save it for snakes."

That awful word again! I slammed that bottle straight for Dirty's head, but I missed him, and it flew among them burros. I hears that bottle thump; then comes a grunt, a rattle, and broken glass and whisky flew all over us.

"Ike," says Dirty awed-like, "when a jackass kicks at it on the fly, she ain't neither good for man nor beast. I'm glad I killed your vote."

"Killed my vote?"

"Uh-huh. Ike, I didn't figure that either side had any favors coming from me and you, and I knowed how you'd vote; so I decided they wouldn't profit if I could help it, and I—I killed your Wet vote. *Sabe?*"

"You did like ——!" says I. "You added to it."

And we pointed again toward the north star.

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UNDUE INFLUENCE

by Robert J. Pearsall

Author of "The Divining-Rod at Grizzly," "Rogues' End," etc.

I WASN'T at all surprized when Sanderson came to me that morning on the after deck of the *Antioch* and told me that he'd been stripped of everything he possessed by Damron. Nor, for that matter, was I surprized at the use of the words, "feelin' of wildness," in describing his sensations during the process.

Very early on the trip I'd noticed the two men, and I'd judged their acquaintance to be one of potential mischief. It was because of that I struck up my friendship with Sanderson, who was a retired rancher, honest, likable, far from stupid but of a rather nervous and fluctuating temperament. Thus I learned that he'd recently lost his wife by death and had also recently been enriched by the discovery of oil on his ranch and its subsequent sale.

Which latter fact, I thought, well confirmed me in my suspicions concerning his traveling-companion. Damron was a large man of almost too imposing presence, well-groomed and impeccably clothed. He was affable, a very fluent talker and unquestionably intelligent, but his smile was purely mechanical and very peculiar, a mere twisting upward of the corners of his lips. His smile never affected his eyes or any of the upper part of his face—it was clearly a danger mark.

Sometimes I felt that Sanderson himself was none too trustful of Damron—but why, then, the apparent friendship?

One evening—San Francisco was then five days astern—I leaned on the rail in front of the door of Sanderson's stateroom, facing the prow. The sunset over the prow was magnificent, like a great dusky conflagration, and the *Antioch* was moving toward it quietly, as if she liked pushing through the low waves. From inside Sanderson's cabin, which he had to himself, came the incessant murmur of a rather musical masculine voice—Damron's voice.

Now, while I was listening to that voice—the words, of course, were indistinguishable—I happened to glance downward, and I saw near my left foot, just at the edge of the scupper, something that was very peculiar to find on the deck of a ship five days at sea. The find had no meaning to me then, but I mentally filed it away, after a fashion I had. I remembered that the only wood near-by was that in the deck itself and in the walls of the staterooms. Some one had been boring either one or the other, for here were a dozen or so rounded flakes just as they had come from the auger or bit, whichever had been used. Some one had bored a hole and had thought to throw the residue overboard; the wind had blown these few flakes back.

My rather idle speculations were interrupted by the cessation of Damron's voice and the opening of the door of Sanderson's stateroom.

I'd placed myself so I could glance at the two men as they came out without turning my head. Sanderson came first, his wrinkled old face looking a little excited. Damron followed, put out his hand and opened the door of his own stateroom, which was next forward to Sanderson's. Smiling his peculiar smile, he nodded to

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Sanderson, shot him what I took to be a cautioning glance and disappeared within.

Sanderson glanced toward me, but my attention was apparently forward. So he stood for a moment hesitant, the salt air whipping color into his rather pallid cheeks and flapping his loosely fitting black suit around his shrunken but still wiry old frame. Then he glanced at the door through which Damron had just passed, and I saw a queer change come over him.

His expression changed completely. Perplexity, distrust, dislike came into his look—and something else, too. Fear, I thought, as if he felt himself being drawn into an abyss. It was the same look I'd caught on his face twice before; I couldn't understand it.

I turned and spoke—

"Oh—good evening, Mr. Sanderson."

He started in his nervous fashion.

"Good evening. I was just goin' in to dinner. Are you?"

He seemed glad to see me. I saw that his eyes, naturally clear blue as the sky under which he'd lived, were slightly bloodshot.

"Presently," I replied. "Not just now. Let's enjoy the sunset. Will you smoke?"

I handed him the mate to my own cigar, and he put it carefully away.

"After I eat, thank ye," he smiled. "But the sunset now, with all my heart. Don't the old boat seem to be enjoyin' it, too; seems like she's alive."

It's a commentary on poor old human nature that the discovery of that common thought moved me definitely to intervention.

"I don't believe, Mr. Sanderson, you have my card."

I usually carry them of several sorts. I fished out the one most frankly descriptive of myself and handed it to him. It read:

JOHN PARTRIDGE
Specialist in the Unusual

He looked at it with puzzled eyes, started to grin uncertainly, and then the idea seemed to slowly dawn upon him that I'd had a purpose in giving it to him. He glanced up at me, more curious than startled.

"Eh? What? A funny business!"

"Well, perhaps," I agreed. "But, I assure you, one of unlimited possibilities. The unusual is everywhere. Even on board the *Antioch*," I concluded significantly.

He seemed to catch that significance, and I believed his eyes quickened.

"What d'ye mean?" he asked receptively.

"Frankness," I replied bluntly. "Can you trust me or not? Or rather, do you want to? That man there." I nodded toward the door of Damron's cabin. "What's between you? Why do you pretend what you don't feel—friendship? And why are you afraid of him?"

It was a frontal attack on reticence, but I'd preceded it by a certain amount of friendly sapping. Sanderson blinked his eyes away from me, considering the confidence. He turned to the rail and studied a bottle-green wave that rose along the side of the *Antioch;* he looked astern, where the sea was slate-colored under the clouds and where the long smoke wreath trailed after the ship, pressed down by the wind over the waves. Then he gave me another long look and spoke quizzically:

"Well, as to likin' him, maybe I do and maybe I don't, but as to gettin' along with him, that's simple. He was my wife's brother, and I don't feel like doin' anything else. As for bein' afraid of him, why, I reckon you exaggerate a little there."

"Oh, very well," I said with a note of finality.

"But he's the darndest talker," he went on quickly.

"I've noticed that," I encouraged him.

"The darndest— Did ye ever meet a man who could make ye see plain that two and two make five or that the world's hollow and we're on the inside of it or that ye can coin gold out of sea-water or—" with an angry snort—"out of fresh air?"

I caught his emphasis on the last absurdity.

"Out of fresh air," I mocked. "A sort of p-n-e-u-alchemy, eh?"

"Why, yes, that's about what it comes to. But, pshaw, I'm forgettin'. It ain't supposed to be told yet."

"A family secret, it seems," I scoffed carelessly. "Well, I suppose you've plenty of cash or collateral on board, that your brother-in-law finds it worth his while to teach you high finance?"

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NOW, he might have got angry at that question, but I judged that he really wanted to confide in me. Also I rather relied upon his native instinct to make him trust me. I really liked the old man pretty thoroughly, liked his evident unworldliness, his countryman's habit of quick friendship and the simple candor that spoke from his pale-blue eyes. And I hoped that he sensed that liking.

I suppose he did, for within five minutes he had confessed to the possession on board the *Antioch* of seventy-five thousand dollars in Liberty Bonds, the total price of his ranch.

He admitted, too, that it had been at his brother-in-law's urging that he had brought the bonds with him. In fact, that he had gone with his brother-in-law from their hotel room to the safe-deposit vault late the night before the *Antioch* sailed to get the bonds. Damron had urged it on the ground of a newly discovered chance for a big-paying investment, which he would explain on the *Antioch*. I couldn't help but feel, under Sanderson's half-shame-faced manner while telling of the folly, a touch of utter mystification as to why he had perpetrated it.

That interview with Sanderson had been two days ago. It is plain why it didn't amaze me that, from being afraid he was going to deal with Damron, he had dealt with him—and in that dealing had lost everything he had. The "feelin' of wildness" he described, with the accompanying imposition of Damron's will, had evidently possessed him before. Moreover, in mulling around for an explanation, my mind chanced to revert to the tiny grains of wood I'd observed on the deck before Damron's door.

"Maybe it's all right," Sanderson tried to encourage himself. "But I wish I had it back, all the same. Maybe he'll trade back."

We were standing well astern on the promenade-deck. It was a gloomy morning with a leaden sea. A stout wind heeled the ship to starboard, but on the lee side of the deck a dozen or more passengers lounged against the rail or lay in steamer chairs. Two young men, athletically inclined, paced each other at a racing stride around the cabins, but they stayed forward, and Sanderson and I were practically alone.

I didn't reply for a moment. Instead, I watched astern where the hungry gulls followed the ship, swooping down now and then on either side or behind the churning wake, where the long log-line dragged. Their wild, mournful cries seemed rather in tune with the morning and with Sanderson's distress.

"I suppose it was a legal enough transaction—papers signed and everything," I hazarded.

"And witnessed by a man Damron called in from the deck," replied Sanderson rather bitterly.

He turned to the rail and leaned upon it, looking down into the water and giving me a good chance to study him. His weather-worn old face had gone very haggard, and his eyes were bleary. He had evidently passed a bad night. Had it not been that he had described himself to me as a strict teetotaler and that there was absolutely no smell of liquor on his breath, I might have conceived a very commonplace explanation for both the cheat and his present condition.

As it was, I must look for another explanation and another form of influence. Hypnotism suggested itself to me, but only as a passing thought; things occult have always failed to interest me. Wonders and problems enough there are in the natural world without going beyond it. And it was at that point I thought of the flakes of wood.

Anyway, there was only one present course to pursue.

"You haven't told me yet just what this precious stock is that he sold you."

"Well, I ain't supposed to. But you might know for sure. It's Consolidated Air Power—five hundred shares of it."

That told me a lot—placed Damron exactly. I don't dabble in stocks, but I read the papers, and I knew that a week before the *Antioch* had sailed a fraud order had been issued against Consolidated Air just too late to catch the promoter, who had disappeared. Doubtless it had been Damron under another name. Resuming his real name, he had attached himself leech-like to his brother-in-law and had succeeded in getting enough out of him to start life again in the Eastern Hemisphere.

But I don't think any of this was suggested in the start I gave at Sanderson's information.

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"What?" I cried. "Consolidated Air Power! Is that what you're carping about?"

My tone roused Sanderson from his lethargy; he turned on me in a flash.

"Yes. Why? Do you know——"

"Why, of course. Why didn't you tell me before? For a man to have fortune thrust upon him and then go weeping over it!"

It was touching how the old man caught at my words.

"What's that? Don't be joking, man."

"It's you that's the joke. No wonder Damron wouldn't let you tell everybody; it's too good a thing to let everybody in on. Wasn't that what he told you?"

"Yes, but— On your word of honor," cried Sanderson, gripping my arm, "is it all right?"

"On my word of honor," I replied, "your brother-in-law is no more nor less than a pneu-alchemist. You said it yourself; he's turning air into money. The man who's selling Consolidated Air Power is the man I want to meet. I haven't your amount of money, and maybe five thousand is too little for Damron to monkey with, but it's five thousand spot cash. As a friend of mine, won't you help manage it?"

Of course, Sanderson's reaction from despair threw him into a mood that made him willing to promise me anything.

A crook in the company of his dupe rarely encourages other acquaintances; so it was only natural that Damron had so far held aloof from his fellow passengers. That afternoon I met him formally, however, and, though Sanderson would not confess to him that he had told me anything about Consolidated Air Power, he had no objection to telling Damron confidentially that I had five thousand dollars loose cash that I was anxious to invest.

I smiled inwardly as I noticed how Damron's interest in me quickened after he had that information. Still it was two days before the dénouement came which I planned, notwithstanding that I always did my best in our conversations to play the financial simpleton. Despite that crooked twist in his soul of which his twist-lipped smile was the outward symbol, Damron was a very clever man. It was hard to make him believe that I was the sort of trustful bird for which the Air Power net had been laid.

But I relied upon his cupidity and merely went on playing the simpleton—except for one preparatory step that I took the same day Sanderson told me how he had been fleeced. That afternoon I took a bundle of very useful keys I always carry with me, on the principle that an honest man has the right to all the facilities used by thieves, and with one of them I opened the door of Damron's stateroom. When I came out, I was quite sure I had left everything behind quite as it should be.

It was the second evening thereafter, in Sanderson's stateroom, that Damron introduced to me the stock of Consolidated Air Power. We had just had dinner together, a very congenial trio. After we had entered the stateroom, Damron excused himself for a moment, as I had expected he would, and, through the one wall that separated us, we heard him stirring around for a moment in his own cabin.

He began to talk on the subject of investments immediately upon his return.

BREATH of violets! Mingled somewhat with clover, fragrance of the meadow and hillside. Surely there could be nothing in the mild and gentle reminder of Springtime that began to pervade the air of the stateroom to cause Damron, launched in the full flood of eloquence, to hesitate, pale, waver in his speech and show every sign of a man distraught by a sudden and mastering fear.

He had taken his seat on the side of the cabin opposite the wall of his own stateroom. Sanderson sat near the berth; I had brought a camp-stool in from the deck and sat with my back against the door. The ship was running on a very even keel; if it hadn't been for the vibrations of the screw and the rhythm of the pistons, we might have fancied ourselves back in the big world again instead of on that detached fragment of it known as the *Antioch*.

And up to a certain point Damron's talk helped to complete the illusion. Trickery and thieving always seem to me to belong to the mainly good but complicated world of clay, rather than to the sea, which is changeable, sometimes terrible, but always clean, simple and honest.

Damron began by a rather loose discussion of energy in general. From that he passed to the gradual tapping by mankind

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of various reservoirs of energy, each release meaning a forward step in the march of civilization. And so he came naturally to his major premise, which was, of course, that the greatest and cheapest supply of energy remained as yet untouched—the energy of the air.

It was at that point that the smell of violets in the room began to be distinguishable. That is, by me, who had been expecting it. Damron didn't get it yet, nor did Sanderson; both were too deeply absorbed in Damron's talk.

He had the gift of words. He understood the art of moving minds, and he used it. Leaning back in that chair with an inspired face, he brought into that cabin the winds of the world—those winds which are everywhere and come from everywhere, and he set them to work.

He brought into that cabin the industries of the world and showed them revolutionized. And he had started to deal—using sketchy touches that I admired—with the recently perfected air motor that was to turn the trick—a device, I believe, of vast, scientifically shaped funnels for the concentration of power and a new form of battery for its storage—when he first became conscious of that violet breath, which reacted upon him like the breath of doom itself.

He faltered, as I've said, grew pale, glanced obliquely at me and seemed from the uneasiness that grew in his eyes to catch for the first time some significance in my position squarely before the door.

I rather felt sorry for the rogue—it's a weakness I have—but my eyes fell on old man Sanderson, sitting there enthralled again by Damron's eloquence, and my heart hardened. Unmercifully Damron had fleeced him, and the winds of life are seldom tempered to the shorn old. For not the first time in my life I felt grateful for that sort of ultra-roguery that must needs load its dice as well as unfairly throw them. Had Damron relied entirely upon wordy persuasion, I believe he would still have had his way with Sanderson, and there would have been small chance of recourse.

However, as Damron's voice trailed away, I put in a word:

"It's fascinating. Transmutation, air turned into gold—Sanderson, didn't you tell me you'd purchased some stock in this scheme?"

Sanderson started, looked reproachfully at me and uneasily at Damron.

"I did tell him about it," he mumbled apologetically to Damron. "He had some money he wanted to invest. I thought you wouldn't mind——"

"Oh, of course not," replied Damron, trying to cover his sudden accession of fear with cordiality. "We don't want publicity now," turning to me, "for a plain reason; it's a matter for careful handling and international financing. However, you're an exception; Sanderson and I both seemed to arrive separately at the same conclusion. I was going to offer to let you in——"

"Thanks," I replied rather carelessly. "What a peculiar odor, in the middle of the Pacific!" I sniffed the air.

"I was just going to speak of that," rejoined Damron quickly. "Somehow, I feel ill. The air in this cabin——"

"Will clear presently, I'm sure." And I shot him a significant glance that checked him in the very act of rising from his chair.

Sanderson, possibly catching my glance, certainly observing the change in Damron's manner, glanced from one to the other of us, puzzled.

"It's a queer smell," he began, "but I don't see——"

"There was nothing like this the other night when you bought the stock, was there?" I asked.

"No, there wasn't. Why?"

"Sanderson told me a peculiar yarn about that night," I explained to Damron. "The way he felt, you know."

Carelessly I brought my hand, which was in the side pocket of my coat, forward until it rested upon my thigh. In that position the outline of the revolver I held in it could be seen under the folds of the cloth.

"He spoke," I said, "of a 'feelin' of wildness.' I suppose he also had a 'buzzing in the head.' 'Ideas swarmed but were hard to grasp.' In fact, he seemed to have 'a very close approximation to an alcoholic jag.' "

"What do you mean?" asked Damron with a sudden note of savagery.

"Why—I beg your pardon," I smiled. "I don't know how I came to do it. But unconsciously I was quoting from a scientific article I was reading in the ship's library the other day, headed 'Is Oxygen an Intoxicant?' There seems to be a doubt. But as to its exciting effects, none at all."

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"How the devil does this concern me?" asked Damron angrily. "Let me——"

"Sit down," I ordered tensely.

He obeyed. I went on as naturally as I could.

"Nothing, except that it was an interesting article. There seems to be room for quibbling. But in law there's such a thing as undue influence, and it isn't usually hard to prove in the case of worthless security. Heavens, how I am wandering. Surely there must be something wrong with the air of this stateroom."

Without taking my eyes from Damron, I got up, reached back of me over my head and opened the round port-hole.

"This fragrance must come through the wall somewhere," I said. "There's nothing in this stateroom to make it. But now—what was I talking about?"

"What, indeed?" snarled Damron.

"Oh, yes—about Sanderson's condition the night he bought Consolidated Air Power. Would you say, now, that he was in fit shape to exercise sound and proper judgment? Then you," I laughed deprecatingly, "are so full of natural enthusiasm—while he's an old man! Don't you think you rather overrode him? Why, ——, Damron, what do you say to giving him back his bonds, which are at least a perfectly safe investment, and taking back your stock, which is no doubt of greater—but, well, shall we say, ephemeral—value?"

Damron's face fairly blazed with the helpless but venomous anger of the discomfited crook. He raised his voice—

"I'll see you in ——."

"Come, come," I said; "the play's ended. Shall I ring this bell and send for the captain? Sanderson, what do you think of your investment now?"

"Why, why—" began Sanderson plaintively. His quick old eyes had been flitting between Damron and me, and he'd followed our talk anxiously and with growing depression. Now he was sitting with his head bowed and a broken look on his face. "I guess I've been bilked, Mr. Partridge, and I think I can figure out how it happened. But I'd rather have stood it than——"

"Than what, Sanderson?"

"Than have him arrested. Lord, man, have ye yourself a wife and that wife a family name, that ye can feel what 'twould be like?"

As it happened, his personal appeal to me was a high miss, but I'm no policeman. Curiosity is my principal motive in these affairs—strengthened in this case by regard for Sanderson. And I saw that the word "arrested" rather feazed Damron.

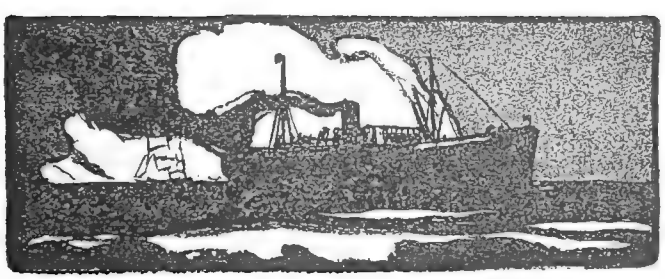
"How about that little bargain now, Damron?"

Damron's eyes had flickered sidewise to a tiny, almost unnoticeable aperture in the wall of the stateroom, just at the level of the floor—an aperture just large enough to contain a rubber tube, through which the telltale scent, released by Damron himself, was flowing. He brought them back to mine with a frightened jerk.

"——, yes, if that's all," he wilted.

Which, of course, wasn't exactly the way I wanted the thing to end. Landing penniless on the China Coast was too good a fate for Damron, but there really was room for quibbling concerning the purpose and use of the three steel cylinders of liquid oxygen Damron had brought with him on board the *Antioch*. Otherwise I might merely have notified the captain of my find in Damron's stateroom.

However, it was vastly more interesting to half empty the last of the cylinders, add essence of violet to the odorless, colorless and tasteless liquefied gas and watch the effect when that volatile perfume cried out "discovered" to Damron's guilty brain.



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SAVAGES

A Four-Part Story

PART III

by Gordon Young

Author of "Heathens," "The Devil's Own," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

"HURRICANE" WILLIAMS, clad in a pair of trousers cut off at the knee, his skin burned black as that of a savage by the sun of the Southern Pacific, looked out from under heavy brows at the slender young man before him.

"Gilbert Lang," he said, "I am an outlaw—a nigger-lover. The most hated and despised white man in the South Sea Islands. Why do you want to come with me?"

Silently Lang held out a hand which bore a heavy ring on which were carved Greek letters. Williams seized the hand and gazed at the ring keenly. Then he asked a question.

"Man or woman?"

"Both—probably. I know they came to some one of these islands, and I was told that you went about on these islands more than any man. So I came to you."

Williams motioned to two handsome young savages, who came running.

"They will get your traps ashore and bring them here," he said to Lang.

So Gilbert Lang came to be the only white follower of Hurricane Williams. Of black followers Williams had many. A swarm of Tongans and Samoans, men and women, boys and girls, followed Williams as he went about the South Seas, trading, fishing, wandering. He was known as a terror. He was far more intelligent than the traders who hated him. And he had nothing to do with white men until Gilbert Lang came to him.

"Vengeance is mine," was written in Greek on the ring that Lang wore, and the three words told what had brought him to the South Seas. It was to revenge himself on the man and woman—brother and sister, supposedly—who had killed his brother. George and Alice Brown were their names, and Alice Brown had been his brother's wife. Lang had never seen either. He had sought them across the earth to the South Seas and joined fortunes with Williams that he might seek them the better.

Slowly he became accustomed to the strange life. The savages he found childlike in their happiness and love of play. The old men and women petted him; the young men became his comrades; the young girls coquetted with him; the children played with him.

Then Williams took the whole party on board his ship, the *Mary*, and sailed to an island where he knew of oyster-beds. Williams half expected a fight at the oyster beds. Not with the natives, for he quickly made friends with Ghorki, chief of the Gopassa people, and with Baraka, the devil-devil man. But with Willerby, king of the South Seas, who also knew of the wealth of the place.

As Lang sat alone one day, Uala, most beautiful of the native girls, crept up to him.

"I love you," she said softly.

Lang was lonesome and homesick. Uala was beautiful. He kissed her.

"Lang!" He heard an angry voice behind him, and he turned to see Williams glare at him a moment and then stride away.

AS WILLIAMS had expected, it was not many days before the boat of Winston Willerby came to the island. On board was the usual crowd of men and women of the sort that Willerby liked to have about him. Chief among them were Lania DuBeque and her cousin, Paul. Gilbert Lang, when he went aboard the *Bebe*, did not know that these were the two for whom he had sought so long.

Lang was not fleeing from the island when he went aboard the ship, and, when Willerby discovered that he knew Williams and proposed that he betray the renegade, Lang refused hotly. For this the furious yacht-owner ordered the boy put into irons.

Then Paul DuBeque saw a chance to make a bluff at playing the hero. Magnificently he offered to go to the island and bring back Williams single-handed. He thought, of course, that Willerby would refuse to let him do it. But to his surprize the captain of the *Bebe* took him at his word.

DuBeque was frightened, but he had a plan.

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A sailor rowed him ashore, and a native took him to Williams' cabin.

There his smooth tongue began its work, and soon he had convinced the renegade that Lang had gone to the *Bebe* to betray him, but that Willerby, who had always rather admired Williams, had thrown the boy in irons for this and had sent DuBeque to invite Williams to come to the *Bebe* for a friendly call.

So Williams went back to the ship with DuBeque. When he came before Willerby, he asked—

"Where's that boy?"

"In irons."

"Why?"

"Because he's your friend, —— him!"

It did not take Hurricane Williams long to fight his way off the *Bebe* and swim back to land.

Then Willerby and his mate, Jackson, went ashore to win over the natives with whisky, and Lania Du Beque stole off to visit Gilbert Lang. The boy had interested her.

On this visit she discovered what she had not known before—who he really was. And she planned a way to get rid of Paul, whom she was beginning to hate.

VIII

WILLIAMS had gone to his ship. The *Mary* had been moored with considerable forethought in a hidden channel that could be reached over a two-hour trail that cut along the coast.

Put a big dumpling inside of a horseshoe, and it will give some idea of the kind of anchorage that Williams had sought. A half mile out at sea and the opening on either side was scarcely revealed, and, in entering either of the narrow openings, no captain would suspect that the channel curved around the rocky island. On one side the ship could do little more than scrape through. Sails were useless, for the big dumpling killed the winds; besides the channel was too narrow to tack in. Williams had kedged his way and expected to kedge his way out when the time came to get out.

But Williams had not come in there merely because he believed himself securely hidden. He had gone over the channel with a small boat and lead. He knew at low tide and high just how much water was between keelson and the sharp, hungry-toothed rocks. A ship, or even something smaller, sunk at either end of the channel would have made an effective blockade.

About the time that Willerby was sprawled in the *Bebe* saloon, telling of what he had done and hoped to do, and while the disconsolate DuBeque tenderly nursed his swathed jaw and enviously watched the others drinking and chattering, Williams was coming back down the trail, and before him walked a number of natives, two of whom carried a box labelled "Dynamite."

Williams was in haste. Banoo urged them on. Williams said nothing, but he seemed singularly indifferent to the carelessness with which the box was borne. The carriers stumbled occasionally and once dropped it—as they did so jumping back in consternation, for, but a few days before, when they had been carrying even the small cylinders taken from a box labelled "Dynamite," Williams had put great fear into them by warnings and vivid pictures of what would happen.

They knew quite well what would happen, too. They had seen dynamite used for killing fish. But natives grow careless without iterated warnings; that is, most natives. But Williams seemed in too much haste to even notice the dropped box. Banoo scolded, changed the carriers and hurried them on.

As they came to the village, all stopped for a moment wonderingly. Howls and yells and cries, whoops and noise unlike anything those ancient hills had heard before filled the air.

Williams at once suspected—actually knew—what had happened. He boiled with anger, an anger not uncolored with disappointment.

As he walked along the street, he saw the natives, some staggering, some lying, in the rain and puddles. Some greeted him with drunken cheerfulness; some glared, remembering that he was a "bad" man, and many others talked among themselves of the disgrace to the manhood of Gopassa that a hundred strange natives should live unmolested in the village.

Williams said nothing and made no sign. He saw everything without moving his head. He tramped on.

At the door of his hut he came upon a drunken Samoan gaping inside, where loud, excited voices rose. Williams' hut was supposed to be inviolable, except to the presence of the two servants, who did their small duties and then remained out, and to the old Marua, who, after Gilbert Lang was brought there, considered that her place of service had also been changed.

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Williams caught the drunken Samoan by the neck and flung him backward, and in a few fierce words he told Banoo to take him and all other of the *Mary* natives who were drunk, as soon as they were sober, and stand them up in some public place for all the others to view and taunt. Already Gopassans and others had begun to come up to the hut.

Then Williams leaped over the high doorway and into the hut. Marua, Uala and Baraka were there.

Williams hesitated just long enough to find out what was the matter. He knew in far less time than it takes to explain.

It chanced that Baraka had remembered that he had a love-charm already made for a young amorous man, who, before he took possession of the charm, went into the hills and was used as a feast for a bushman village. Ordinarily it requires some time and as much art as the wizard has to make a love-charm. It is perhaps best not to describe it in detail. But Baraka, drunk as he was, remembered it, and, though wizards would not confide the fact with any one, a charm made for one person will serve another just as well. So with this in hand he set out to find Uala and to prove to her that she was bewitched in favor of Willerby.

Uala did not want to be bewitched for Willerby. She loved the white boy. She fearfully resisted the charm. That she had considerable faith in Baraka was revealed when she had taken to him her precious knife as the price for casting the demons out of Gilbert Lang.

Marua, attracted by the argument, put in an appearance. Uala, half fleeing from Baraka and half searching Williams, had gone to the hut and, as she felt it was more or less sanctuary, had entered. Baraka came in. Also Marua.

Marua insisted that it was futile, also dangerous, for Uala to resist. It was not proper for a woman to resist a devil-devil man. It was one of the things that a woman did not do. Uala was very foolish. She could not escape the working of the charm, not possibly.

Uala was frightened and troubled.

Then Williams came in. She swiftly, hopefully appealed to him.

Williams' answer was swift and terrifying. He scarcely more than saw the charm, heard who it was for, perceived that Baraka was drunk, than he understood everything that had happened, and in a frenzy of disgust and anger he caught the devil-devil man by crop and leg and pitched him headforemost through the doorway into the muddy street.

There was an instant commotion, a tidal commotion that swept through the village. Many witnessed Baraka's humiliation, and some rejoiced but did not dare let him know it; others were horrified. They rather expected to see the audacious—it was the audacity of the act rather than the sacrilege that impressed them—wither and shrivel away before their eyes. Perhaps all of the magic had been jarred out of Baraka, for certainly, if there had been any potency in his curses, Williams would have suffered dire things. He raged and pranced, called down a torment upon Williams and harangued those about.

What kind of men were they to let this fellow show contempt for their gods? What evil fortune would come down on them! He would see to that. Indeed he would. They were men with fear in their hearts. They let strangers fill their village.

There was the devil to pay. The village was in an uproar. Williams sent one of his men to see the chief, but Ghorki was drunk. Everybody was more or less drunk: women and children, too.

ALL that changed the aspect of things. Williams had determined to stay as long as possible and get out as best he could, to fish for pearls and let the shell go. Scarcely once in a generation does the profit in pearls make it worth while discarding the shell, but this seemed to be one of those rare times. Williams needed money or its equivalent. He was barred from civilized ports and had to pay three prices for such commodities as he got from traders or when by special arrangement he had a ship meet him.

He had counted on the support of the village to hold Willerby at bay until a warship should put in appearance, and he had already planned how to elude the war-ship. He did not know where the nearest was. It might be days, but more likely would be weeks, before it could be found and come, though he expected that Willerby would either send or sail away for it.

But whisky had done the mischief. The village had got the taste of whisky, and everybody in the village would want

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whisky as long as it could be gotten. It would be nearly useless to argue, even when they had sobered. However, he had hopes, though he did not think they were very reasonable, and he lost no time in making preparations for whatever might come.

Most of the women and children, with a guard of men, were sent off under Banoo to the ship. Banoo was no trifler.

Williams called the two-score fighting men that were left, told them to stay together and under arms and keep quiet. He buckled on a revolver and went alone down the street, followed at a little distance by the irate Baraka, who continued to scream, and by a straggling group of Gopassans.

He went straight to the *tambu* house, the men's lodge, and inside. Chief Ghorki was there, drunk; so were many others. They had already heard of the insult to Baraka and believed they had cause to be very angry.

Williams went in alone.

Gopassans followed, and Baraka came storming and squatted in his little section farthest from the door, above even Chief Ghorki, in the highest place of honor. All glowered at Williams and muttered, chattered among themselves, each urging the other to rash courage.

Williams stood unmoved and silent, his arms folded, and looked about with a contempt that was not lost even on their whisky-soaked brains. They were too drunk to be argued with, but not too drunk to get the significance of what he was to say to them.

He began to speak.

They were getting ready to dip their hands in blood, were they? Begin! Gopassa would become a burial-ground. If they wanted a fight, they could have it—now! If they came near the Samoans and Tongans with arms in their hands, they would go to the land of shadows with holes in their bodies. He and his people had come as friends and remained as friends, but the Gopassans wished them to be enemies.

Right! They would be enemies. But did these Gopassan fools think they could fight when their legs were unsteady as broken bamboo? Did they think they could fight just because their bellies were hot with magic water? Let them try. Why not begin now? He was one man, alone!

There was no answer. Williams knew that he was close to death. One yell from some bolder or crazier native, a gesture over head toward the handle of a club or spear, and the silent, awe-eyed men would become demons. He could not hope to shoot his way out. He would go down. But, if he had not, alone and defiantly, carried the challenge under the very roof of their *tambu* house, they would have brewed trouble in their own fashion.

He turned and went out without looking back.

The Gopassans were puzzled and angry. There was only one way to explain it. Williams had powerful *mana*—magic. He was dangerous. Not as a man is dangerous, for weren't they men, too? And were they afraid of any man? No. But the man with powerful *mana* is not as other men. It is no disgrace to be afraid of him. Yet, if one kills him and uses his thigh-bone for a spear-haft, that one will acquire the great *mana*. That fact was well known. But it is perilous to try to kill such a one.

So they talked. Talking is thirsty work. The whisky bottles had long ago been greedily emptied. There was only one thing to do, and that was to go to the *Bebe* for more and tell "Willa'y" what had happened. Some of them went.

When Williams went back to his hut, he found Uala again in it and looked at her questioningly. She was sitting on the box labelled "Dynamite," waiting for him.

"Me stay with you," she said decidedly, but her doubts at being allowed to do that were evident in her face.

"I told you to go to ship."

"I no want a-go. Marua talk talk everybody. Say I have no lover 'cause a-that—" and disdainfully she poked her foot at the love-charm which had dropped from Baraka's hand when Williams grabbed him. "All make fun at me. I hate 'em!"

Williams thoughtfully eyed her.

"Do you love him very much?" he asked.

"He is sun, heart, everything!" she exclaimed eagerly.

"He is a white man," said Williams, speaking quietly.

"So you!"

"Yes." And with the faintest trace of amusement he added, "But you do not love me."

"I do!" she flashed at him.

Williams understood. She was grateful for what had happened to Baraka, and she

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wanted to stay with him. She loved Williams as she might have loved a maternal uncle, but she would have perjured herself up and down the alphabet to cajole him into letting her have her way. Williams liked her with tenderness: her beauty and gaiety pleased him, though he treated her with as much detachment as he treated the others. He regretted that she had become in love with Gilbert Lang; he regretted it the more because Gilbert Lang had responded. Williams very much wished that Gilbert Lang was out of the country, or rather out of the Southern Seas.

He felt that no good from his presence could come to Uala, and Uala was dearer to him than any white man's son. But all in all he was glad that Gilbert Lang had been the kind of a boy that enraged Willerby rather than yielded to him, though the latter would have made Gilbert Lang one of the *Bebe* party while the former contingency required that Williams should cast about for some way to get him off the *Bebe*.

"You go to Banoo," said Williams, "and tell him I said you were to go to the ship and stay there."

Protests and tears.

Williams paid no attention to them. He did not appear to even be aware that she was still in the hut but busied himself with some papers.

At last Uala, unable to combat silence, sorrowfully went to the door. She was only learning over the lesson that all the natives knew well: when Williams gave instructions, he meant them. When he decided, he could not be shaken.

At the door she turned back with tear-stained face, her big brown eyes as wobegone as the dripping sky overhead, and she said:

"I hate you!"

And she was gone.

Then he smiled a little to himself as he righted the sheets of nautical calculation which he had, unnoticingly, been staring at while they were upside-down.

The afternoon and evening passed without trouble. The night, too. The departure of the women and children with their escort had been like a miniature exodus, and they went jeering and being jeered. There were some jeers at the two-score warriors that remained but these were delivered at a distance, and regarded with disdain. These two-score warriors knew Williams. They had fought under him.

They had fought rebels in Samoa—rebels aided by the Germans. They had stood against the swarming attacks of islanders in the Santa Cruz and New Hebrides groups. There was no reason to fear. Some ten or twelve of the two-score were Tongans. The Tongans were more like the Japanese than any other islanders resemble any of the great nations: that is, they were polite and warlike, and they would charge even when outnumbered.

Williams rather impatiently waited the night out. The whisky had interfered with his plans. He thought perhaps he had been a little too timid in delaying to see what the Gopassans might do instead of directing, as he had intended, his attention toward the *Bebe*.

ON THE *Bebe* there was much excitement. A surprizing thing had happened. Willerby, red and roaring, tramped the deck, damning Gilbert Lang. The women and men excitedly, tense, but really delighted that something thrilling was happening, talked together. Jackson and Willerby tried to devise some suitable plan, but nothing could be done. No, Jackson did not know how Gilbert Lang had got a gun. He could not imagine who had taken the irons off his hands. Certainly he had been ironed; at least he had told Grogan to iron him. But Grogan was gone on the lugger. There was no way to question him.

The steward swore that nobody had been near Gilbert Lang except some of the men who had gone on the lugger. They went into the storeroom for some tins of biscuits. He had forgotten all about Lania. She had asked him to, and, when without her having asked men forgot all about God and their souls, it is not too much to expect that the steward would forget such a little thing as her visit to the storeroom when she asked him to. Her reward had been a smile, a sweet tone and the pressure of her hand on his arm. Men have killed other men for less.

It had happened that along early in the afternoon Lania had sat near the dejected Paul DuBeque, and none were near them. She had been tenderly sympathetic and talked much. Paul could not talk. He could only listen and think. She mentioned Williams. Too, she mentioned Gilbert Lang—but not his name. Spoke of

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him merely as "that fellow." Wondered where he was. Was sure that he would get off the ship all right. Suggested that Willerby would turn him loose. Was willing to wager a little that right now that fellow was being treated like a guest. Remembered DuBeque's threat that he would be dead inside of a week. Said perhaps that threat wouldn't hold good now that his poor jaw had been hurt.

And she so strummed the chords of his hot discontented mind that Paul shook with fury.

She sent for the steward and, before Du Beque, asked if the steward happened to know where that fellow, Gilbert, was.

The steward did.

Would he leave the key with her a minute.

The steward would. He would have left his head with her had she asked for it.

When the steward was gone, she suggested, ever so delicately—if there can be any delicacy in excitement to murder—that, should that fellow be found dead, knifed, no one could know who did it. No, not if—for instance—she and Paul should in the next three or four minutes go up to Willerby with the key and say they would like to see how that fellow was getting along. Willerby would not care much anyway if the fellow were found dead, but a little precaution was good to keep the lips of the others from buzzing.

She got up as if the whole subject was already out of her mind but carelessly left the key on the arm of her chair.

Whether DuBeque went to the storeroom out of curiosity, just to see how Gilbert Lang was being cared for, or went to kill him is hard to say. DuBeque always carried a knife inside of his shirt and under his arm. He did not have it out when he opened the door. But then he no doubt expected that Gilbert Lang would be ironed hand and foot.

But Gilbert Lang was not. He had spent some reflective hours since the gun had been placed in his hands, and the idea of shooting down anybody became more and more revolting to him as he watched the door expectantly. He really could not believe that anybody would try to assassinate him. Lania was no doubt sincere but too easily alarmed. Yet his position was disagreeable. He was willing to do almost anything but murder, and he was burning with a kind of cold rage. Yes, ice burns. Hold a piece in the hand, and it soon gives the sensation of a live coal. And a cold rage is that anger that leaves a man quiet, patient and desperate.

The first thing that DuBeque saw as he peered into the room was a large revolver within a few feet of his face. He wrenched his jaw painfully in the surprize of dropping it, or trying to, when he started to cry out.

"Come in and shut that door!" said Gilbert Lang, and he meant it.

Rage had smelted down a good deal of his youthfulness.

DuBeque pulled the door shut.

"Sit down."

Gilbert Lang indicated a spot against the bulkhead and underneath the dim lantern.

DuBeque sat.

"Now you make a move, and I'll kill you, just as sure as my name is Gilbert Lang!"

Frightened as he already was, that name gave DuBeque a new thrill of terror. His thoughts raced back over the months. Gilbert Lang was a name well known to him. The Langs, father, mother and brother, had often spoken of Gilbert. And this was he; undoubtedly this was he! DuBeque was amazed that he had not noticed before how much this boy was a Lang. The resemblance was exceedingly remote, except that DuBeque's heart was guilty and in the sudden maturity of Gilbert Lang's voice there was an echo of his father's, and possibly of Frank's. The father was always grave, though Frank had been more pleasant, light-hearted.

So DuBeque shivered and stared.

Lania sat in the saloon while the little blonde chattered on. Lania did not know of what she was talking, did not catch a word, though her attitude was attentive. She was wondering if she could hear the roar of the gun when Gilbert Lang fired. Certainly some one forward would hear it, investigate and shout the alarm. Tensely she waited. Minutes passed, and the ship was not disturbed. The waiting became unbearable. The little blonde was repeating bitter remarks that she had made to somebody or other, but Lania's ears were elsewhere. Her hands were clenched at the side of her chair with the strain of waiting.

"And I says, 'If you don't like it, you know what you can do!' " remarked the little

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blonde, imitating the sarcastic disdain of the original words. Then quickly: "My heavens, what's the matter? You look sick!"

Lania's face was rigid and drawn. Something of fright was there, too. Supposing something had gone wrong? Supposing Gilbert Lang had told of her coming and how she brought to him the revolver!

"I don't feel just right," said Lania, getting up.

"Let me get you a drink."

"No, no. I'll go up and get a little fresh air."

And Lania went up to the poop, where she found Willerby dozing under the awning.

IMPULSIVELY, and feeling that she must say something to somebody, she began:

"W. W., I don't know what Paul is up to. He had me get the storeroom key from the steward. That boy's locked up in there, I hear."

Willerby grunted and sat up.

"I forgot all about him."

"I'm afraid something has happened."

"Don't worry. He's in irons. Maybe DuBeque wants to even up that wallop on the jaw. You can just bet pounds to pennies that I've got that fellow Williams into a kettle of spoiled fish! I've just had a barrel of whisky I was going to send over to Thursday Island brought up. I'm goin' to keep them niggers drunk for——"

"Please, W. W., have somebody go see what's the matter with Paul. I don't know why, but I am afraid something——"

"You women, always afraid of something. I'll go myself. Want to take a look at that fellow, anyway. But what's he doin' in the storeroom?"

"I can't imagine," she answered.

So Willerby went to the storeroom, and Lania followed.

He opened the door. Gilbert Lang stood not in a direct line of vision but to one side; so Willerby saw DuBeque sitting on the floor between two barrels before he saw Gilbert Lang. As a matter of fact, he scarcely saw Gilbert Lang at all. When he had put his surprized face inside of the door, he saw the extended gun, and he heard Gilbert Lang—

"Come in here and ——"

But Willerby heard no more. Instinctively he jumped back, and, as he jumped, Gilbert Lang shot. The door swung shut.

The boy shot without thinking. He had a gun, and he was in earnest. After he shot he was glad that he had missed—but also glad that Willerby had heard the terrific roar of the gun.

"I'll shoot the first person that opens that door again," he cried out, then added, "except to bring food."

Willerby stormed. He was furious. Lania was very much alarmed. Excitement spread through the ship.

Jackson came and tried to parley through the door, but Gilbert Lang was stubborn.

He told them that, if they tried to do anything, he would shoot DuBeque first and then as many as he could when they opened the door.

DuBeque could say nothing. For one thing it was a physical impossibility.

Gilbert Lang was a little surprized at himself. He was still further surprized at not being frightened, scarcely nervous. He did not know how it would turn out, but he had a hostage to insure good treatment. He held such a position inside of the storeroom that any one opening the door would expose himself. He was master of the situation indeed. He had not been up and down the world enough to see the jest in the situation, to laugh at the way he had partially turned the tables and to fling sarcastic taunts at the door. He was grimly serious.

So serious in fact that he shouted that, if they attempted to put poison in the food, as soon as he felt its effect he would shoot DuBeque and then come through the door to kill as many as he could. He meant it, forgetting his feet were ironed. He could walk in his iron hobbles, but with difficulty.

And so through the afternoon and through the night he kept his vigil. It was not easy to stay awake as the night dragged its long length around the clock, but he was afraid to doze.

Jackson and Willerby talked and planned. Jackson, of course, advanced the theory that the boy must have had the gun on him all the time and that Grogan had neglected to search him. Grogan was gone. Jackson felt a kind of amused admiration for Gilbert Lang but did not dare show it. Besides, he disliked DuBeque and would not have cared very much if the boy had shot him. But Willerby was devoted to DuBeque, and moreover he was enraged

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that any one should get the best of him, particularly on his own ship.

The others, men and women, were agitated as parakeets. They stood around, whispering nervously, like children listening terrifiedly for the roar of a cannon—wanting to hear it, yet thrilled with terror. Not that they wanted DuBeque to be shot. They disliked him, or had disliked him, but now they felt a sympathy for his predicament and waited in more or less of ecstatic apprehensiveness for what might happen.

Lania alone was silent. She was very nervous, too, try as she did not to show it. Every one remembered how devoted she had been to her cousin.

Along in the afternoon the *Bebe* had visitors from the village. The Gopassans told their troubles as best they could and asked for more whisky. Willerby could understand that they were afraid of Williams, and that made him the more infuriated. The Gopassans thought that if some of the white men from the *Bebe* would come over and help them, it would counteract some of Williams' *mana*.

"Maybe a scheme, W. W.," whispered the fat roué, who did not under any circumstances want to go ashore, "to get us over there. That Williams—you know!"

"Wouldn't be s'prized," said Jackson.

He did not want to go on shore to fight Hurricane Williams. Nor was it altogether because he had a kind of honest admiration for Williams: he knew something of the reputation of Williams' natives.

Willerby gave the whisky generously and said the men would come soon, and with the whisky the natives returned to their orgy. But other natives came. Some canoe or other was always alongside. Willerby wanted to encourage their friendship, though he knew that they were imposing on his generosity. But it was the price he had to pay.

Somewhere around midnight Willerby, in the presence of his friends, decided that with morning he would promise Gilbert Lang to turn him loose.

"That's what he wants. An' we got to make him believe he can have it, before we get a chance to take that gun away. Then," said Willerby fiercely, "I'll show him!"

There were some who kept silent at this brilliant plan. Jackson said nothing. Lania said nothing. One or two of the others had no comment to make. But Willerby did not notice. Others applauded the diplomacy that would first disarm the "enemy."

Now it happened that, though lookouts were stationed to keep off the natives that came through the night, because such visits might be dangerous, these were instructed not to make the natives angry and that after daylight they could have as much whisky as they wanted.

So shortly after dawn a number of canoes appeared in the bay, and the lookouts, still on watch, gave them only casual attention. One canoe drew near and came alongside. It was a small outrigger, carried but two men and some kind of a curious elevation on a platform laid on the outrigger. This looked something like a box across which a mat had been laid. Anyway, a mat was on it. The outrigger came alongside and, while one of the lookouts stared over the side, made fast to the side of the ship.

Then swiftly another canoe approached, a large canoe, carrying ten or fifteen men. It came on rapidly, and the lookout turned to call Jackson. In the two or three minutes that it took to get Jackson to the side, the large canoe was almost up against the ship, and Hurricane Williams, rising from the bottom where he had been somewhat concealed, stood up.

Williams shouted to the men in the outrigger. One of them jerked off the mat and exposed on the outrigger platform a large box, marked with large letters—

DYNAMITE

"I'm comin' aboard," Williams called above him to the deck of the *Bebe*. "Stop me, and these black boys will fire into that box, and we'll all go to —— together!"

Then it was that the two natives in the outrigger displayed revolvers, and one—as if drilled—promptly stuck his revolver against the box and waited expectantly.

Jackson in profane alarm swore that this nigger could not possibly know what was in the box. He had a poor idea of native courage and a big, rich idea of Williams' cunning.

"Wait till I get Willerby on deck," he shouted at Williams.

"No," Williams answered.

And the big canoe swept alongside of the sea-ladder, and with a bound and a leap Williams was scrambling over the freeboard and into the waist.

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SUDDENLY, almost miraculously, a number of rifles—hitherto hidden—appeared in the hands of every other man among the rowers, and these were pointed, not at the *Bebe*, but at the dynamite box.

Jackson was a big-bodied man, and haste ill became him, but he went in precipitate haste for Willerby's cabin and banged on the door loud enough to awaken the dead. And incidentally he awakened almost every one on board. His roaring voice excitedly told what had happened and was likely to happen.

Hurricane Williams and his pirates were on board and about to blow up the ship: that was the idea that the suddenly awakened sleepers got in their heads.

Women screamed, and the men, some of them—and none of them very strong—turned pale and shook. They tumbled out in what is called disarray: one-third dressed, faces unwashed and swollen with sleep and marked with terror.

Willerby, in brilliant yellow and black silk pajamas, flung open the door.

"On board my ship?" he cried.

"An' a hundred niggers!" Jackson roared, growing more excited and not wishing to minimize the danger.

"Why didn't you shoot him! What do you mean by lettin' him get close——"

"Dynamite!" Jackson yelled. "He sent a canoe alongside with a ton of dynamite on it an' a crazy nigger holdin' a gun against it!"

"Why'd you let him!" stormed Willerby.

"Let 'im, ——! He didn't ask anybody t' let him! He just come. He was there when the lookout called me."

Willerby tried to relieve his feelings with curses.

"He's on deck waitin' for you. That crazy nigger may shoot any second. An' it's dynamite! Hear me, dynamite! Ton of it!"

"What does he want?"

Willerby too was shaking a little—perhaps because the wet morning air was a little chilly—and his red face was a kind of an ashen gray—perhaps because he had arisen without his usual jolt of brandy.

"You!" said Jackson, largely because he did not want the responsibility of interviewing Williams.

"Tell him to get off!" said Willerby weakly.

Words failed Jackson for countable seconds; then he blurted that one word that was seared on his brain—

"Dynamite!"

"Let me go talk to him, W. W.—till you get dressed," said Lania, slipping closer and touching Willerby's arm.

"Er—yes—yes—till I get dressed," said Willerby a little dazed and relieved.

Willerby was no coward in the usual sense of cowardice. He was shaken, and shaken the more because he felt helpless before all these friends to whom he posed as a strong, dominant man. He would have gone on deck and kicked any ordinary man off it. But Williams was different. He had not only legend about his name but, by a personal encounter, had shown that legend did not exaggerate.

Lania, however, was a woman and conscious of her beauty. When Monna Vanna went into the tent of her husband's enemy, she did no more than every woman feels she could do—that is, if beautiful. Lania, getting hurriedly out of bed, had not been so hurried as to neglect to straighten her wealth of hair, wipe her eyes of sleep with a moist rag and put on an attractive dressing-gown. She was not afraid of Williams.

The terrific force, the volcanic explosiveness of the man, appealed to the tigerish hunger within her, and there was also the thrill of conscious superiority over the other women, none of whose matutinal charms would inspire them to play Delilah or even Monna Vanna before brandied coffee, curlers and the rouge pot had restored to them the attraction that sleep snatched away.

She gathered the silken folds of her gown in one hand and, modestly closing the bared throat with the other, started up the ladder.

"Please, I wish to go alone," she said over her shoulder to Jackson and loud enough to check the fervid curiosity of the others.

So she went alone. But Jackson went forward and came up by the fore companion, bringing himself on deck but too far away to hear.

Lania went to the poop. Williams was not there. She looked over the side and saw the natives and, too, the box and its bold, sinister letters, with the native still standing, finger on trigger, muzzle against the side of the box. She looked into the waist; Williams was standing motionless, his arms folded, near the side.

"Mr. Williams!" she called.

He looked up.

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She was a vision rather than a woman.

"Will you come here, please?"

Williams' narrowed, fierce eyes swept the deck fore and aft. Many sailors were about—at a respectful distance. Without answering, he climbed the poop ladder and stood before her, his face hard and tense.

"Mr. Willerby will be up in a few minutes. You have called rather early."

She said it sweetly, disarmingly.

"Who are you?" He spoke with surprize, as if she was not unknown to him from of old.

"I am Lania DuBeque, Mr. Williams. I suspect that you have come for the boy, Gilbert Lang."

Williams said nothing: she felt as if she were talking to an image of flint, an image of flint with human eyes.

"Am I not right?" she asked coaxingly.

"I'll talk to Willerby."

"Mr. Jackson frightened us all very much by saying that you were about to blow up our ship, but——"

Williams' lips did not move. He waited.

"But I am sure that you would not. Gilbert Lang is on board, and he must be very dear to you!"

Williams' eyes shifted from her. He was making sure that no one was slipping behind him while this enchantress tried to hold his attention. He said nothing.

Lania had never met, never imagined, such an unyielding man.

"You may think it strange that I came up alone to talk to you—" and Lania dropped her voice and, after looking over her shoulder, added—"but Gilbert Lang will be able to tell you what I did for him. They threw him into a storeroom—and he has my cousin in there with him, is holding Paul as a prisoner. I tried to help him, the boy."

"Why?"

There was something of the jerk of a snatching hand in Williams' questions, and there seemed, too, something of immemorial bitterness in his eyes as he glared at her.

"That is something I can never tell to any one," she replied softly, mysteriously—consciously enveloping herself in that half-sad, appealing mystery that is the sweet solace of many women: something sad that implies untold and unrevealable volumes.

It might imply almost anything, as, for instance, that she had become body and soul infatuated with the boy, but was too much the woman to speak of it.

WILLIAMS had no susceptibility for her. She was beautiful, fascinating, bewitching. She could, and knew it, do almost anything with men. He had noticed her the night he came on board, but now he perceived the close family markings common to her beautiful and Du Beque's even battered features. He had noticed her: he could not forget her face. But she could have lured a piece of flint, heart-shaped, more readily than she could have moved him, though she had spoken with something approximating sincerity in her words, "That is something I can never tell to any one!"

But he knew there would be no sincerity in her love for anybody. He knew women. He knew men. He knew this woman called Lania DuBeque. His brain with rapid perception sorted and pieced memories; he made a conjecture scarcely surprizing but rather inevitable. And Lania reeled before the next question that he flung at her, a question that did not ask but declared—

"Are you Alice Brown—too?"

"Oh!" she gasped.

Gilbert Lang had told nothing to Williams consciously. When he had, in a way, tried to justify the odd inscription on the ring, Williams had roughly said—

"Go to a priest!"

But, in the nights that Gilbert Lang lay feverish and muttering, Williams had stood watchfully by, not only listening willy-nilly, and not forgetting, but flooded with memories of his own, memories that made him so much the better understand the tragic fate that had come upon the brother of Gilbert Lang. There were not a sufficient number of such women as could captivate a man like that brother loose in the South Seas—even if Williams' brain had not perceived other evidence—to make the guess a blind and foolish one.

"No, no!" she cried desperately, madly, trying to save herself. "It isn't that; I love him! I do—" and she talked rapidly, fearfully agitated.

Few people, if any one, can ever very clearly perceive their psychological processes. Lania was actuated, consciously, by fear and a mad desire to cheat Williams out of the belief that she had ever worn the name of Alice Brown. Without putting her finger on it and saying this is so and this is not, she had nevertheless not had much fear of Gilbert Lang, even though

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he should learn who she was and seek vengeance. He was a boy, merging to manhood, and she was a woman with all the arts of deception and simulation.

But Williams was different. If he had thrown his aegis about Gilbert Lang, perhaps, too, he held in his hand a sword to strike on behalf of the boy's vengeance—and Williams was unshakable. In the brief minutes of their conversation she realized that no siren graces would move him.

Frantically, as she talked, she realized, too, that she must not admit that she was Alice Brown; so she checked the surging impulse to beg him not to tell Gilbert Lang that she was Alice Brown and torrentially spoke of love—of the sudden, overpowering passion for the boy that had at sight seized her. That would be an explanation to dovetail nicely with what Gilbert Lang might later tell of her visit and promise to aid him to escape. She was an exceedingly cunning woman, resourceful, quick of perception. Only the fierceness and accuracy of Williams' surprizing question had momentarily bewildered her.

"I want him," she cried. "I would follow him to the ends of the earth to be his slave. I would give my life for him! I love him! Don't you understand—I love him—I love——"

Willerby tramped on deck. He had paused in the companionway and heard the last words.

"Love who?" he said loudly, suspiciously, and yet with more of wonder than suspicion.

A tremor ran down her suddenly rigid body as for a second she froze, with terror leaping in her eyes. Then she turned with uplifted arms:

"You, my dear! You! I have pled with Mr. Williams for your life!"

Williams said nothing, but an expression not wholly unlike one of amusement stole along his bearded lips and touched the corners of his eyes.

Lania flashed to him a look of complete interpretation: it would be fatal for her if Willerby knew of her love for Gilbert Lang.

Still Williams said nothing. He let the little drama play on and stood taut as canvas filled with a gale.

Others had followed Willerby on to the deck. They had heard Lania's high voice, for she—with all of her cunning—had sadly forgotten how loud she talked. But, fortunately for her, nothing she had said belied the slender soft arms she placed about Willerby's neck, and the remark that she had pleaded for Willerby's life sent a shiver down the spines of all. Williams did look grim and dangerous.

"What is it you want?" said Willerby, coming forward a little and something of his old fighting-spirit rising to the surface.

"Before you use that gun you have your hand on in your pocket," said Williams coldly, quietly, "you had better take a look over the side. That boy has orders to fire into that box at the first shot from this deck—and he'll do it. And those others in that big canoe will shoot at the box instead of at anybody on the deck."

"I got no gun," said Willerby angrily, as he took his hand away.

Then he and his friends crowded to the side. They passed close to Williams, but he stood immobile.

Willerby, pretty much impressed, inquired again and in a more agreeable voice as to what it was Williams wanted.

"If we turn that boy loose, Mr. Williams, won't you be satisfied?" Lania cried pleadingly.

"No," said Williams.

Eyes widened, and throats gasped at that ominous word. Even Lania felt a chill at her heart.

"What do you want?" asked Willerby.

"Throw all your rum, whisky, wine and brandy overboard!"

That seemed almost an anticlimax to the frightened group on the *Bebe*'s deck. They had expected blood to be spilt: it was only alcohol. The deepest sigh of relief came from Lania.

"What do you mean by telling me what I shall do on my ship?" Willerby cried, fanning himself into an anger and encouraged slightly by the lack of violence in Williams' demand. "I'll see you in —— first. If you blow up this ship, you blow yourself up too, an' I don't believe——"

"No," said Williams sharply, arrestingly. "That dynamite is tied alongside. If I jump overboard, so do the black boys in the canoe with it, but the others—those out there in that war-canoe—shoot at it from a distance. It has all been carefully planned, Willerby, and you can take your choice. I'm not here to argue but to stop the drunkenness in that village and to get Gilbert Lang. What do you say?"

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There was something inordinately convincing about Williams.

"I'll get you for this!" Willerby shouted.

Williams did not answer. He moved backward toward the railing as if to leap over.

"Jackson," Willerby said, calling down to where his captain stood, "break out all the liquor an' throw it over. All of it—understand. All!"

And by the very emphasis of the order he conveyed to Jackson that, if he dared throw it all over, there would be Winston Willerby to answer to; that just a reasonable amount of the cheapest stuff should be tossed over.

"You leave," said Williams to Willerby, speaking low—like just a tiny bit of steam escaping from a boiler strained to the point of explosion, "one drop of booze on board this ship, and I will blow it up—with you on it!"

"Jackson, pitch it all over. Everything," and there was no reservation in his voice as he gave the second command.

THERE was bustling to and fro, a running up and down ladders, the rattle of the winch, and soon the scuppers were running with liquor, and the sea was plashed with bottles and boxes.

"Bring Gilbert Lang," said Williams.

"Bring him!" Willerby shouted. "He's in the storeroom with a gun an' 'll shoot anybody that comes near him! He's got DuBeque in there an' threatens to shoot him if we make a move."

Williams turned questioning eyes on Lania. She had told him as much, but he had seen no particular reason for believing her; he had reason for being skeptical now.

"That is right, Mr. Williams," she said.

"You lead the way," said Williams to Willerby.

He did not need to add anything more. His eyes, his voice, his attitude, conveyed that, if Willerby wanted to come back unhurt, there had best be no trickery between-decks.

Willerby led the way, and, as he stopped before the door, there was no sound from within. Every time before when any one had come near the door, Gilbert Lang had called out threats. Now there was silence.

"Open it," said Williams.

"He'll shoot!"

"Open it!" Williams repeated, his voice, as usual, low, commanding.

Willerby slipped the unsnapped padlock from the staple and pushed the door open. And, as he did so, Williams, close behind him, peered inside and saw DuBeque, who had crept closer and closer to the sleeping boy, snatch out exultingly and wrest the gun from the lax fingers.

Paul DuBeque, encouraged by the sound of voices, by the opening of the door, had pounced upon the gun toward which he had been moving for a half hour by imperceptible inches. DuBeque had been slipping along the deck in such a manner as would allow him to instantly pretend to be asleep, to have moved in his sleep, if Gilbert Lang stirred.

He never fancied, could not have believed if he had imagined it, what was going on above decks. So, snatching the gun, he forgot his broken jaw and cried exultantly between closed teeth as in his haste he fumblingly turned the gun so as to shoot the dazed boy, who just then sat up and for the moment was unable to remember where he was.

Williams did not cry out. He did not pause. With his unnatural and truly marvelous coordination between perception and action, he roughly flung Willerby to one side and leaped—hurled himself right down on DuBeque. By a flash of motion he wrenched the revolver away, at the same time with a back-handed blow knocking DuBeque's head to the deck like the crack of a fallen coconut.

Willerby, recovering quickly, saw that Williams could be trapped. To foil the natives on guard over the dynamite box would be something to give attention to later. He swung the heavy door shut and was hastily slipping the lock into the staple when Williams literally hurled himself against the door and jarred the latch from off the staple. Willerby leaned heavily against the door. Again, again, again, again, in repercussive blows, delivered with unbelievable rapidity, driving his whole body as if it were a fist, Williams smote the door.

It opened enough for a wedge of his shoulder to enter. Willerby called loudly for help. Williams with furious energy pried door and Willerby back. Then he slipped into the passageway and without pause or word leaped for Willerby.

Blow on blow crashed into Willerby's face. Willerby struck back and hard, but

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he might as well have been beating his fists against the bulkheads. Sailors came—Jackson, too, and the men and women from the poop. Also, Gilbert Lang. His ankles were in chains. He was hobbled but had not been fastened to a bolt in the deck. When Williams had gone through the door, he had deliberately dropped the gun. Whether it was hesitancy to shoot down a man or whether he loved the pounding of a hated man's flesh, is not easy to say. Perhaps something of both and a good deal of the latter.

It looked as if he were bent on killing Willerby with his hands. It had not been carelessness that caused Williams to drop the gun. He had dropped it where he could stoop and get it any second. He had no other arms but a knife, and not once did his hand ever go toward that. He knew that he was a better man than Willerby, than any two men on the *Bebe*. He might be called overconfident, for odds meant nothing to him, as they seldom do to men who have few friends and many victories behind them.

For one of the few times in his life a friend was behind Williams. Gilbert Lang, crawling rather than hobbling and in peril of being crushed by the door against which the two men in a tumult of blows shoved and banged, came into the passgeway and seized the gun.

"Stay back! Stay back!" he cried, looking fore and aft, nor forgetting to glance inside the door to where DuBeque lay moaning, scarcely conscious of anything but his splitting head and throbbing jaw.

Willerby's face was bruised, cut and bleeding. Williams was far from escaping scathless, unmarked, but with him it did not seem to be so much an aim to knock Willerby out as literally to beat him up. At times Williams would rake Willerby's face with a downward blow from the edge of his knuckles instead of striking a direct blow; then again it would seem that he was determined to kill Willerby outright: a furious drive would crash home to body or face, knocking a grunt from Willerby and slamming him against a side of the passageway.

Willerby was a powerful man but slow and easily winded, and after a minute's fighting he could scarcely swing his arms. Fat, rich food and booze, together with a soft bed, had taken from him much of the driving force that in earlier days had made him a terror, but a good deal of his spirit was left, though his strength was gone.

But Williams seemed relentless as well as tireless.

Willerby, exhausted, dropped his arms and leaned heavily, unresistingly, against the bulkhead, gasping—

"I'll kill you yet!"

Willerby was whipped, exhausted, worn out. It had been a hard, brutal, quick fight. Gilbert Lang felt a little sorry for him even while glad. Pity was in Lania's dark eyes. Few can see a man, even a big, blustering, domineering man, crushed and bleeding without compassion flickering within them.

BUT WILLIAMS—Williams paused, then deliberately, cold-bloodedly, lashed out to the point of Willerby's jaw. He struck, not with his fist, but hit with the base of his palm where wrist joins hand, and Willerby's head went back against the bulkhead, then rolled to his shoulder, and he sank down in a heap, motionless.

Gilbert Lang gave a half-smothered cry of protest and reproach.

Williams, breathing hard, turned and looked at him but said nothing. He turned toward where Jackson stood and, pointing at the boy's ankles, said—

"Take those off."

"Can't—haven't the key."

"Get it!"

There was much of Williams' characteristic menace in the instruction. His body, for a moment relaxed, suddenly contracted again, and he leaned slightly as if to rush if Jackson or any of those with him wanted to fight.

"It's not on the ship, Williams. Grogan took it. Forgot t' leave it."

"On the lugger?"

"Yes."

"Where for?"

"Shortland. Supplies." Jackson added the "supplies" as an explanatory afterthought.

"German?" Williams snapped, not for a second deceived.

Jackson nodded.

"Listen," said Williams. "Help that boy to the deck. Give me the gun." He reached out and took it from Gilbert Lang. "Now, carry him up. And remember,

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when we leave, that dynamite stays alongside, and, if you shoot at us, we will shoot at it. Is that plain?"

"It sure is," Jackson said.

So they went up to the deck. Williams called the war-canoe alongside, and, when he and Gilbert Lang and the two natives from the outrigger had got in, the canoe shoved off, with a dozen rifles expectantly leveled.

But all seemed quiet on the *Bebe*.

As soon as the canoe was out of rifle-range, the brass canon suddenly ran its nose over the side and roared at them. A round iron ball splashed near but short. A yell went up from the natives, and rifles were fired futilely. The rifles were dropped, and, seizing paddles, all struck out rapidly. The cannon fired again, but the aim was bad.

Then Williams said—

"Gilbert Lang, why didn't you shoot DuBeque?"

"Oh," said the boy, shivering a little, "I couldn't do that. I just kept him——"

Williams eyes were hard and straight, but his tone was enigmatic as he said:

"Better throw that ring into the water. He's the man you came to find. That was the woman, too!"

"Oh, my God!" said Gilbert Lang quickly, unnerved.

A kind of stupefied realization that Williams spoke the truth settled on his face; then he slumped down, silent, head bent, and tears came from his eyes and dripped down his face.

Williams stood up and peered continually at the shore toward which they were making and where many natives had gathered on the beach.

On the *Bebe* there was a fluttering panic. The fight in the storeroom had interrupted the destruction of the liquor. Many of the sailors had secretly stored away a supply and were freely sampling it. Willerby with water and brandy was being brought to consciousness. And DuBeque, coming out of his nightmare, groaned and moaned, but, making his way to a pencil and piece of paper, he wrote excitedly:

"Boy, brother of Frank Lang—we must kill him—better have two murders than tried for one—make W. W. go after them."

He carried this to Lania, and she simulated astonishment: one would have said that she had never thought of the boy being the brother of Frank Lang. But she was inspired to put feeling into her play by the realization that Gilbert Lang had not told DuBeque of her visit and help.

The deck of the *Bebe* was crowded. The thrills were not over. Willerby, with one eye shut and the other swollen, his face black and red and sore, his head aching, his chest paining him, opposed the sugggestion to drop that box of dynamite into the ocean and be rid of it. He had no dynamite, and he wanted it. He swore that he would use it to blow up Williams' ship, for Williams had taught him a game that two could play at.

So the people of the *Bebe* looked over the side while the sailors gingerly hoisted the box, and all held their breath as it scraped the ship and again when it was gently lowered to the deck.

"Full, all right," Jackson shouted up.

"Open her up. Careful now," said Willerby.

He had already made up his mind to carry the war into Williams' territory, to go right over to the village and start the war.

Carefully, gently the short nails were pried loose. Jackson and the others knew the name "dynamite," and none of them had ever handled much of it; so they did not know with what careless familiarity it may be treated by people who have become used to it. The people on the *Bebe* looked on breathlessly; they felt much as if a lighted candle were burning in a barrel of powder.

The boards were loosed and raised. Jackson stooped over—and raised up, cursing hysterically, half in anger and half in amusement.

"Bluffed, by——! Bluffed by a box of coral rock!" he shouted up at Willerby.

IX

IT HAPPENS that the impression is very much abroad that a bully is always a coward, a braggart, a liar, and that a mean, treacherous mind must necessarily be minus the bravery ascribed to heroes. It is only in biographies and other stuff made up largely of fiction that admirable persons have all the elemental virtues. Willerby was a bully, a braggart and treacherous; also he was fat, soft and venomous, but it was not entirely by playing on the weaknesses of commissioners and captains that he had won and held his wide trader's domain in the South Seas. In his younger days he was more easily aroused

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and less the diplomat or trickster than when he ran face to face with Williams, but, whenever deeply aroused, he was a hard man to check and he would fight.

It was useless for those on the *Bebe* to argue with him or try with flattery or vivid descriptions of perils to get him to sit down and await the coming of the German warship. He was determined to carry the fight to Williams, and he expected to be accompanied by those he had entertained as friends. Evasions on their part were of no value. The only man he would have excluded was DuBeque, whose jaw was broken and who was in obvious pain. But DuBeque, for reasons of his own and Lania's—though it was his own neck he cherished—wanted to do what he could toward killing Gilbert Lang and Williams.

His fears as to the length of Justice's arm may have been a little exaggerated, but Justice had been known to reach from the States, from London, from even an obscure village in Sweden, into the South Seas and seize whom it wanted, and some of those same gunboats that would readily shell a village from which one of Willerby's traders had been driven would as readily clap DuBeque and Lania into irons and carry them off at the mere whisper of "murder."

Willerby had been so long among islanders that he knew pretty well how to manage them, provided they had not become too contaminated by "civilization," and he had no more fear or cause for fear in preparing to take up quarters in Gopassa than on some gentle Tahitian shore. He had made friends with the Gopassans, and now he offered them war against aliens: from the Carolines to New Zealand white men had become allied with savages in the same way.

Rifles and ammunition were broken out, the crew mustered and detailed, supplies raised, the trade goods meant as presents examined and a very small quantity of the salvaged liquor set aside for gifts. Now that Willerby was going into the village, he did not want the natives drunk.

Willerby's chief fear was that Williams would sail away. He had heard about where Williams' schooner was, and he was under the wrong impression that it was a kind of a narrow bay rather than an islet.

He sent the lugger—he had come with two—to investigate, but the lugger came back late in the afternoon and reported that it had been unable to find the hiding-place of the schooner, and Willerby was furious.

Jackson had already gone to the village, given a few presents and informed the pleased natives that the *Bebe* people were coming to help them drive out the "foreigners."

The natives, persistently encouraged by Baraka and ugly from drinking, were in a fighting mood. Williams and his men were still in the village; it would be glorious to drive them out and feast on those that were left behind.

Shortly before dark Willerby was ready to leave the ship with all the men who could be spared. The boats were in the water, and they had begun to embark while the women, fearful and tearful, watched, crying a little or trying to appear cheerful.

Then Lania appeared and, without saying anything at all, came and stood by Willerby.

"What on earth?" he asked in surprize.

"I am going, too," she said.

She was dressed in a short skirt, with leggings, a short velvet jacket and wore her mass of hair tightly knotted under a man's hat. Around her waist ran a belt of cartridges, and from it drooped a rather heavy revolver for a woman's fingers.

"Putting it over 'im! Comin' a flash play! Gorry, isn't she the clever bird? 'Opes a cannybal heats 'er!" were some of the under-breath comments of the women, who were jealous of what they thought was her shrewdness.

No matter what other influences may have contributed to Lania's impulse, for one thing she did not care to stay on the *Bebe* with that cat-tongued group of women.

"You're a great one!" Willerby said, pleased.

And it may have been unconsciously, or it may have been with a kind of proud satisfaction, that he tenderly pulled at the lobe of her ear so that the hand closed lightly over one of the black pearls that so distinctively signified his favor.

WILLIAMS knew pretty much what was coming and how. The rain had stopped, though the sky had not cleared, and he regretted that the sun had not been bright for several days. He would have burned the village—or tried

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to. That would have been a quick and comparatively humane way of showing the Gopassans what it meant to fight against him.

If the Gopassans and Willerby wanted war, they could have it. He did not intend to run. He could have sailed away before the German war-ship came, but he did not intend to. He was waiting for it—and without any illusions as to the hazards he ran by waiting. One well-directed shot from its guns and his little schooner would be sadly injured; two or three such and he would likely have a wreck on his hands.

He slung his hammock to a long pole, put Gilbert Lang into it and sent him to the *Mary* by carriers with orders to have the irons filed. Also he had rockets sent back to him and had several bamboos cut at a length of about six feet and the growths at the joints, inside, burned out.

He was entirely familiar with the trails about the village and in twos and threes sent off about a dozen men to hold the one that ran along the coast to the islet where his schooner was; then just at dark he quietly left the village, and, though the natives had seen him and his men go, they did not know what he was up to.

The night came on black as pitch, and with it more rain.

Willerby and his party, wildly welcomed by the natives, felt very confident and secure. The best that could be had was theirs. And, though Willerby cursed at Williams' running away, he was determined to go out on the trail, if possible come up to the *Mary* and keep her from getting away.

From what the natives had told him before, and what he now learned, he knew that Williams' schooner was in a very narrow strip of water and that she could not possibly get out without kedging. Now, as it is impossible to kedge without going ahead of the ship in a small boat, Willerby reasoned that he ought to be able to win a vantage-point that would enable his rifles to keep anybody from kedging, and he felt that he ought to do it before morning lest Williams should slip away at dawn.

When that vantage-point was won, then he would have the *Bebe* brought around, and with that double precaution he could to his heart's content harass the schooner until the German came up. If he could capture the schooner before, so much the better. He had brought everybody who could possibly be spared. Chief Ghorki's heart was not as much in the project as Baraka's—the chief would go into the fight, and Baraka would not, though Baraka would get all the credit for the victory by virtue of his magic—yet he gave the order, and the warriors armed and bedecked themselves.

Skirmishers and scouts went out, and some of them did not come back. The others reported that Williams had conjured an enormous number of devils out of the air to fire his rifles; not that they really believed it, but the rapidity of fire that had broken on them when they ventured too close to Williams' outpost stirred their imagination.

At the council of war Baraka did the talking and did it effectively. A judicious allowance of salvaged liquor aided, and the natives grew more and more excited; so hideous in their streaked bodies, horribly gashed—tattooed—faces, that Lania was rather nervous as she sat by Willerby's side. She was the wonder of the night to the savages: a woman allowed in a war council.

It was settled. The attack was to be made. The warriors slipped out, oddly silent after so much noise, and Willerby, taking his white men and guided by Chief Ghorki and a few of the chosen Gopassans, took the trail. The strategy was good: Willerby would try to win along the trail to the schooner, and the warriors sent out in groups would outflank Williams' men, get in behind and cut them off.

Willerby thought Williams a very poor tactician indeed to be making a stand so near the village, but such a stand he was making as the scouts had reported. By all sense of tactics he should have fallen back nearer to his ship.

Skirmishers were sent ahead; the others followed, momentarily expecting an attack. Rod after rod they pushed on, comparatively silent, or as silent as they could be. Lania stubbornly refused to leave Willerby's side, and Willerby was to the front. Also by him DuBeque, taciturn, in pain, but determined, trudged.

Two corpses of Gopassans were found. They had been among the scouts first sent out when the rifles spoke. But now the rifles were silent.

Willerby again cursed Williams for running away; particularly as in this instance the "running" was a decided tactical

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advantage. But Willerby pushed on, straining his ears to hear some cry or rifle-crack from the flankers.

Coast natives are timid about venturing into the bush at night, and seldom—perhaps never—do it unless on the business of fighting. Then courage burns a little brighter, and they take the risks against the powers of darkness. But they are inclined to be skittish though bloodthirsty.

The presence of the white men helped some, but there were no white men with the flanking parties.

Willerby pushed on resolutely. He became less cautious. It might be that Williams was trying to kedge out at night—a hopeless undertaking, but Williams seemed the sort of man who often made a success of the hopeless undertakings. It was dark, very dark, and beginning again to rain. The flanking party had rounded and come into the trail; the party came very near being shot at by Willerby, but native signals are clever. Nothing had been seen of Williams' men.

That information was disappointing and angering. The enlarged party hurried on recklessly: the others had run. It was almost like a victory to the natives, an unsatisfactory victory, but still there was something of the joy of chase.

THEN, when they were almost within sight of the *Mary* and could in another twenty rods have seen her lights, a hundred fiery-tailed monsters leaped sizzling out of the night. They came from silence. Not a shout, not a cry, not a word or rifle-crack to indicate that these fire-monsters were assisted by human agency. There were not a hundred of them, or anything like a hundred, except to native eyes, but the rockets sprang from the bamboo "cannons," which not only directed their flight but had kept them from the rain, and they leaped over and at the horrified Gopassans, who did not hesitate but ran yelling their fear.

Willerby cursed. He shouted that they were only rockets and harmless, but he might as well have quoted a nursery rhyme. The natives went howling, and so did most of the white men, for fear is contagious, and they had never needed much of an excuse to run. Willerby cursed again. Lania stayed by him; she drew her revolver. DuBeque had jumped back, but he came up again. Jackson laughed in disgust and contempt:

"That's a-kind o' men you've been feedin'!" he shouted at Willerby; only he did not use the word "men": he used several bitterly profane and vile epithets to indicate the male "guests" of the *Bebe*.

Not a half dozen of all the tenscore remained with Willerby. No shots were fired at him. No more rockets went up. No yells. It was almost awe-inspiring; inexplicable.

"Maybe they're goin' to cut us off," some one suggested.

And at that Willerby and those with him turned and hurried down the trail after the fugitives.

Williams had outgeneraled—if the word may be used in such a little affair of the bush—or perhaps "outadmiraled," Willerby. If the Gopassans had charged instead of run, they would have found no opposition. The reason the rockets had been fired in silence was, first because Williams knew that silence would be more awe-inspiring, and secondly because there was scarcely more than one man to a bamboo there, and for those men to cry out at all would have been to reveal their weakness.

Williams himself was not there. He knew Gopassans were unaccustomed to rockets, fearful of strange things at night and that they would run. He knew that the white men would too, for they would think themselves outnumbered. Some two hundred yards away from where the rockets had been fired, he had placed Gilbert Lang and a dozen trustworthy natives on a high and very nearly inaccessible rock, together with food and a supply of ammunition.

This rock commanded the vantage that Willerby had been after. From it, the little guard could snipe at will without much danger of being rushed. It might be "besieged" and cut off from the ship by the superior numbers at Willerby's back, but Williams did not think so.

While Willerby was pushing along the trail, Williams was busy with other plans—such as would rescue his "garrison" if it were "besieged" and do much else besides. It was a perilous risk he had taken, but he was not unaccustomed to taking risks, and the daring of it was in a way its security. He had left a strong guard on the ship and on the rock instead of putting them on the trail to fight, because he knew that in the disorders of night-fighting much ill-luck

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could happen and because that disposition was safest.

But he and all the Tongans, including the redoubtable Banoo, and three or four of the more courageous Samoans had hid along the trail quite close to the village and had been within twenty yards of Willerby and the Gopassans when they passed. They had been even nearer to the village than the first scouts had found them, and they had crouched silently in the shadows and bush, knowing that no one would think to look for them right there at the edge of the village. They were so close to the trail that in daylight they could scarcely have avoided being seen: native eyes seem to have a faculty for looking straight through the densest brush—so many generations of them have anxiously scanned the brush for enemies.

As soon as Willerby and the last of the straggling warriors had gone by, Williams and his men slipped out and by a detour reached the beach. With as little noise as possible they scuttled every canoe that could be found, excepting the biggest war-canoe, which, when they had finished with the blows of their short axes on the bottoms of the others, they ran from the shed and eased into the water over the "slip" of logs laid side to side—like a corduroy road. And then they silently in the black, raining night, crept out and alongside of the *Bebe*.

Three black boys, the white steward and the white boatswain, with the two Chinese boys, were the only men on board. A black boy was supposed to be on watch, but he had gone into the galley to be out of the rain and, of course, was soon sleeping.

There Williams found him, and, when the boy opened his eyes and mouth at once, Williams' hand closed on his throat, and there was no outcry. The boatswain was drunk and helpless; he was dragged unconscious from his bed. The others were routed out, lined on the deck and made to wait. They shivered, expecting sudden death. The women were roused, and a lamentatious commotion they made. They had their fears for nothing. Williams sent them all ashore under a crew of his men, who brought the canoe back and scuttled it by the *Bebe* ladder.

It takes a year, sometimes more, of labor to make a war-canoe, and it is—or was then—done with no other instruments than shell, bone and fire. Not all the gifts of the *Bebe* could compensate the natives for their losses that night.

With the first flush of light Williams caught the morning winds in the *Bebe's* sails and made off, not forgetting to take the lugger, which had been moored and left without a guard on board. Wild rejoicing greeted the *Bebe* as she was warped into the islet channel where the *Mary* lay, and the natives poured aboard her, running hither and thither, examining everything—the women and girls particularly interested in the cabins of the women—and appropriating whatever they could carry. It was loot.

Because he needed more help, Williams brought in practically all of the guard off the rock. With those who came in was Gilbert Lang.

"I certainly congratulate you!" said the boy, more enthusiastic than his formal words implied.

Williams gave him a sidelong glance and said nothing.

Gilbert Lang, a little embarrassed by that, asked if it were not a matter for congratulation—having left Willerby high and dry on the beach.

"It's piracy," said Williams simply.

"Piracy!"

"Yes. And you are into it. If they catch you, they'll hang you—alongside of me."

"You don't mean it!"

"I do."

THE ambition to be a pirate was very far from Gilbert Lang. What childish ambitions he may have had were not now retained. "Pirate" is a fearfully vivid word, and he was very much astonished to discover that he had become one. He tried to point out to Williams that the *Bebe* had been seized in self-defense; that Willerby had tried to kill him, and the boy was very earnest in exposing the justification—not because he had even a vague idea of ever saving his neck by such a plea, but he honestly felt that Williams had been justified.

"I know," Williams said. "I know we are not to blame. But this is piracy. What is more, I am going to carry from the *Bebe* everything that I need. They won't use a longer rope on my neck because of that. I should have run, but they would have chased me. I don't like being hounded. I have been wanted for piracy—just

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about like this piracy—for ten years. And, if they catch you, you'll be hanged with me. Willerby and your friend, DuBeque, will see to that."

Gilbert Lang's face was strained. Williams had spoken convincingly, had spoken in a matter-of-fact, tense way, as was usual with him. But, on the other hand, Gilbert Lang could not feel that it was real—some echo-like voice from an obscure coign within his brain seemed insisting that none of it was real: the bushman, the *Bebe*, the DuBeques—and now war and piracy. It was nightmarish, exhausting without being terrifying: unreal. Had he been swept in some unimaginable way to another planet and found their grotesque shapes and unbelievable conditions, he would have felt much the same way as he did.

"Now," said Williams, "I can do just one thing. I won't leave, myself. I hate the Germans. But I'll give you Banoo, ten sailors and that lugger. Banoo understands dead reckoning. He'll get you some place. Safe. How soon can you be ready?"

"Right now!" said Gilbert Lang eagerly, thankfully.

"I thought so," Williams answered coldly as he turned away.

Williams was looting the *Bebe*. It was piracy, as he had said. He took what he needed or wanted of stores, ropes, canvas, of nautical instruments, anchors even, and, warping the *Bebe* alongside the *Mary*, with booms and blocks and men and women at the ropes began transferring the cannon.

Gilbert Lang wondered if with that ancient muzzle-loader Williams hoped to oppose the German. The man seemed wild and desperate enough to do anything.

But, when he thought of leaving, of going off on the lugger, Gilbert Lang thought of many other things. True, Uala flashed amid them. But it was not she that gave him pause. He had seen her the night before. She had very much embarrassed him with her joy and frankness, before all the others, too. A native girl does not think love is something to be concealed, repressed. Not much! It had been distressing to have her arms about him while fifty people stood around commenting while the irons were being filed from his ankles.

Uala had taken it for granted that he would never leave her; that he was as glad to see her as she to see him. He liked her: she was much the adorable child. But marry her—the blood of all his ancestors shivered! Yet he felt a sneaking meanness at running away from her, or, more accurately, he felt regret and was sorry that she had so completely misunderstood.

He went on board the *Mary* and to his cabin. He was packing and thinking. He stopped moving about and sat only thinking. His door was slightly opened, and suddenly he was made aware that people were talking in the passageway by hearing his name.

He listened. Any one listens when he overhears his name.

Williams was telling Banoo to get ready to take out the lugger.

"No," said Banoo.

For any one, particularly a native, though the son of a chief, to say "no" to Williams was something to astonish even Gilbert Lang.

Then there was silence, and it was at length broken, not by explosive words from Williams, as Gilbert Lang expected, but by a calm, low, almost affectionate tone that seemed very odd out of Williams' throat.

"You refuse?"

"No go," said Banoo. "With you I go any place—quick. Him? No. I not leave you when you fight."

"But Uala," Williams said significantly.

"I not leave you," Banoo answered stubbornly.

"But, if I insist—order?"

"I sink him ship. Swim back. No go."

"Then Uala will marry him."

"Uala woman. Plenty women. I no leave you now."

"Do you hate him? Is that why you don't want to do him a favor?"

"Him? No. Let him run away. I no go with him. My father say: 'Banoo, in fight keep your back to king's breast. Die there.' White men come too many. I go with you. Big fight now. I no go away. No."

And Gilbert Lang began to understand why Williams preferred black men to white.

He thought again of how Williams had come on board the *Bebe* after him, to get him off. And now Williams was in trouble and needed every man.

He thought, too, of his quest of vengeance unfulfilled. But he was not now so lustful for blood. It is easy to wish, even plan, to kill some abstract person from whose hands has come great wrong; it is something

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different to have met that person and found her not at all as one expected.

But at last Gilbert Lang arose from his bed. He went across and knocked on Williams' door. No answer. He went on deck. Williams could not be found.

There was a commotion up toward the forecastle. A crowd of natives was gathered about a loudly weeping woman. As he went up to see what was the matter, the natives gave way and looked at him curiously, as if he were a stranger.

Uala was sobbing. Some of the women and girls were trying to console her as best they could by saying that Gilbert Lang was not handsome anyway, and, if he had stayed and married her, she would probably have found him disagreeable, finiky over his meals, so really she had cause for rejoicing rather than for heart-burnings. But Marua was not among those who gave her any such comfort. Marua remembered the love-charm of Baraka's and with inevitable gratification said, "I told you so," or words to that effect. And what else could Uala expect when she had opposed a witch-man?

Gilbert Lang came right into the center of the group before he knew of what they were talking. He would have fled with half a chance, but he did not have it. The girls began to scold him. Uala looked up with tear-laden face and pitifully burst into renewed lamentation.

"You go leave me! You go leave me!" Uala wailed.

"Who said I was going?" he asked.

"Banoo," some said, and some said other names.

That he was going had become pretty well known.

"Banoo doesn't know," the boy answered. "I am not going!"

Because he was young, both in years and in experience below the equator, nothing ever happened as Gilbert Lang expected. He had intended to add something about not running away while Williams needed men. That was the thing that deep down had influenced him. No matter what else he had done, Williams had been a friend.

But he did not have a chance to say anything of that. There were surprized cluckings and glad cries. With a bound Uala was about his neck—and the boy, very much embarassed, blushingly submitted. He could not tell her that it was not for her that he was staying. Neither she nor any one else ever dreamed that it was otherwise.

But later, when he told Williams that he would stay and see it out, that to go now would be too much like running away, Williams asked:

"Thought of what it means to spend your life here? Native women wilt quick. They are not pretty then."

The question jarred. Gilbert Lang could only make a confused answer about "that not being why" and, if he came out all right, he could "leave later."

But Williams did not understand, although the boy understood plainly enough what Williams meant. And in a kind of careless desperation, a moment of psychic recklessness, he thought to himself what difference did it really make? Why not stay in the South Seas? The home ties were broken. Why not follow the fortunes of Williams to the end? Why not take Uala as a wife? What a thing of weaknesses he had been to think of leaving while the DuBeques lived!

The imperceptible perfume of the lotus, the lotus of the tropics, the sweet, insidious poison of the South Seas, had touched him. The stern Northern conventions seem so remote, so distant, in the flowers and purple island haze of the equatorial belt. And the transient madness of the lotus-eater came on him.

"To —— with it all!" he said with sudden bitterness and resolution, thinking of what had been; what might have been if he had fled on the lugger.

THINGS were happening on shore. The Gopassans and Willerby's men had with daylight prepared to fight. North and south to all the villages along the coast within reach of runners messages had been sent. None of those villages were as large as Gopassa, and, though they had warred one on another from time to time, they were always ready to join forces in raiding bushmen or repelling—trying to repel is more accurate—the war-fleet from Bouka, the island at the northwestern tip of Bougainville. The Bouka folk were of large bodies and implacable ferocity.

But Willerby had not waited for the arrival of reinforcements. His rage at the loss of the *Bebe* very nearly killed him. He was not far from an apoplectic stroke. The natives, too, were in a great rage with their

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canoes destroyed, but they were inclined to talk much before going out to fight. It was with difficulty that Willerby got his force ready, but, having got it under way, he moved with caution; then, suddenly breaking cover at the head of the white men, he carried the rock on which Williams had placed his guard.

Only a half dozen had been left, and, by reason of their advantage and the close proximity of the ship, these had appeared to be sufficient. But one thing not counted on was Willerby's boldness and rapidity.

The rock was rushed, some of the men on it killed, the others captured, wounded, and along the shore a long distance rifle-fire opened up. Willerby had the vantage-point over the channel, and he proceeded to make much of it. At a hundred yards rifles may not be accurate, but they are deadly.

Williams cleared the deck of women and children, put a few of the Tongans in sheltered positions to watch and snipe and, going to his cabin, went to bed.

He awoke late in the afternoon and, when it was dark, broke out a small anchor and kedged another hundred yards up the channel, leaving the *Bebe* behind him with a small guard on her. He was now within shouting distance of the channel entrance on the north side, but a very abrupt stretch of low rock from the shore almost blocked the channel, while the bulk of the island shut him off from view.

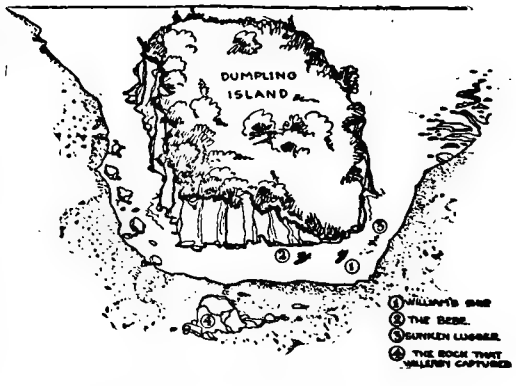
A ship outside might be within less than a quarter of a mile and not see him; a ship might be right at the mouth of the channel and not be able to shoot at him. To secure elevation enough for the guns to drop shells on him, a ship would have to go back out to sea, and, as the target could not be "plotted," all such gunnery would be guess-work. But a ship could come into the channel by the northern or southern entrance, both of which were narrow, and it would have to move with extreme caution.

When morning came, Williams took the lugger to the northern entrance and scuttled her. He did the scuttling under fire from the shore, but it was not a heavy fire, for Willerby's men did not have more than thirty rifles.

He sank that lugger very carefully and with exacting precaution. It looked as if the channel was effectively blocked: in which case he would have had to warp his way for some two miles to get out by the southern entrance. To Willerby it appeared that Williams, suddenly mad, had trapped himself. But Williams was a shrewd, precise navigator. To get to him, even to shoot at him, the German gunboat would have to come through the southern entrance and pass along rocky cliffs, which in some places almost overhung the water. But the height of the rocks decreased as the channel wandered around northward, and, excepting the large one where Williams had posted his ill-fated guard, there were none that gave a decided advantage over a ship's deck.

The elbow of the shore by a peculiar formation ran out in a zigzag of low coral. Remember the channel was like a dumpling inside of a horseshoe. The dumpling was higher than the horseshoe and shut off a view from the ocean. The water was far too shallow around the tip of the horseshoe for a ship to get close enough to shore to shoot across that tip. Men with rifles might get to the island heights, but they would be farther off from the navigable course in the channel than on the Bougainville shore.

The situation was something like this:



It must be recalled that Williams had gone over it carefully before he brought the schooner in there. So to speak, he knew every inch of water, the position of every rock, and, with a very clear idea of what he was about, he had gone into the channel to await anything that might occur.

Now it happened that he heard from the Samoan sailor who had been with Willerby something of what was going on ashore. This Samoan, a fellow who bore the name

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of George, came swimming to the ship in the night-time—just as soon as it was dark—and gave very good reasons for deserting Willerby. Williams believed him, but as an extra precaution he had one of his own men attach himself to George and, without the appearance of being a guard, keep George within sight.

Briefly, George said that the men killed and captured on the rock were to be eaten. Three of the six men on the rock had been killed, two wounded and one caught unharmed. Cannibalism is extremely repugnant to Samoans. How much of George's desertion was due to a sort of racial regard for the unfortunates and how much was due to the fear that the cannibals might wish to add him to the pot, is not easy to determine.

The news he brought set the natives to wailing. Most of them were in near or distant ways related to some of those men: that is, everybody was in a fashion related to everybody else, or, if not actually related, they thought so and felt as if they were. The casual matters of life and death were regarded by them with a degree of stoical fortitude. But cannibalism! That was death compounded with horrible disgrace.

George also told of how the villages all around about had been invited to join in the fight, and that the feast was to be delayed until all of the warriors had arrived and how it was to be held right down close to the shore so that those on board the schooner could not choose but see.

IT WAS easy enough to tell, even at that hour of the black, raining night—a little after nine—that the Gopassans on shore were hilarious. They were making a great noise, such a noise as indicated that the supply of "whiky" had not been exhausted. They had been set down by Willerby to besiege the schooner, if a ship may be besieged, and George said that Willerby and most of the white men were with them. That was important.

The natives, if left to themselves, would be but poor guards: they would get drunk and sleep. They had been disposed along the shore-line so that it was impossible to make a concentrated attack against them: that is, they were scattered, and, assailed at one point and driven back, by closing in from right and left their numbers would be overwhelming. Nor can terror often be created twice by the same means so as to put the whole of them into flight: a tremendous noise, like a cannon, will always disconcert them, but Williams knew that Willerby had patiently explained what rockets were and how they were not to be feared.

Willerby seemed to have the advantage. He did have it on the shore, and he would not, would not dare and would not be inclined to, lift a hand to stop the feast on the Samoans.

It happens that loyalty is a primitive as well as an elemental virtue. The natives who followed Williams had great faith in him; they knew that he would never desert or abandon them. This may have been "policy" on his part. It is, for instance, on the part of British ministers who will send a gunboat, a fleet and an expedition if need be to any part of the earth to rescue the most obscure of British citizens—and the result is that younger sons of the empire go boldly, proudly, into the far places and plant their standards. It was with something of the same spirit that the Samoans and Tongans followed Williams.

So the necessity was imposed on Williams of doing something to rescue the captives and the dead bodies for a decent burial. He had the desire to do that, too.

As usual he kept his own counsels. He had the small boats lowered, the oarlocks greased and pretty well muffled with wrappings of oiled cloth, and, taking the Tongans and Gilbert Lang with him in one boat from which a line was run to a well-manned boat behind so that it could follow easily in the pitch-darkness, he set out. He had little more than his acute sense of direction and a compass held to a darkened lantern below the gunwale to guide him.

The two-score fighters had left the ship quietly, in darkness. There had been no more noise than could be helped, and no lights showed. They knew that they were going on a raid, and it was whispered that they went to bring their dead and wounded. Had it been whispered that they were setting out for a raid on the British Isles, it would have been much the same.

Banoo with a long pole stood in the bow, feeling the water's depth and guiding the boat from rocks. Williams was in the stern sheets, steering. Near him was Gilbert Lang.

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When Gilbert Lang felt a gentle, tender pressure of an affectionate hand against his arm, he gaped in surprize and jerked away. A smothered giggle came to his ears.

"Uala!" he whispered voicelessly.

"Ush!"

Taking advantage of the darkness, she had slipped into the boat and impatiently waited until it was a good distance from the ship before making herself known to Gilbert Lang, close to whom she had contrived to place herself, and about him she now wrapped her soft, warm arms.

Banoo called out softly that all was clear ahead: he could not see, but he recognized by the deep water and absence of rocks within reach that the mouth of the channel had been past. Williams told the men in both boats to lay to their oars, and with rhythmic bend and sweep they laid their weight against the oars and plowed through the waves. On and on they went, occasionally catching the most indistinct of glimpses of a more solid blackness shoreward when a rift in the clouds appeared below the moon.

Williams sat silently, calculating, straining his severe gray eyes in the fierce effort to penetrate the gloom, scarcely less black than in the primordial abyss before the birth of the sun. Hour after hour they went on, the rowers taking turns at the oars.

The painter between the two boats had been cast off. The one at the rear, there now being no cause for silence, followed the low calls continually thrown out to it.

Perhaps it was luck, for Williams was accounted very lucky by those unaware of how he studied and worked, or perhaps it was the faint glimmering of moonlight that occasionally filtered through the clouds, dropping water like wet sponges squeezed, or perhaps it was that hyperacute sense of direction that is found less frequently on the ocean than on prairies, combined with phenomenally accurate calculations, or perperhaps it was something of all these things—anyway, Williams did find his way into the long narrow bay near the edge of which was the village of Gopassa. He found it at a time when a bat could scarcely have made its way.

It was after midnight. The journey coming was longer than the return trip would be. For one thing the gray dawn would soon come to light the way. The beach and village were silent. Even the dogs had taken shelter: besides, dogs sleep too far away from the beach to give warning, particularly in rainy weather.

The boats landed. A lighted lantern was covered and placed in the stern—the boats landed stern on—and by each two men were left. They were to uncover and raise the lantern at the first outcry so that the returning natives could easily find their way in the darkness.

Then the men were sent out along the water's edge to look for canoes in which warriors had come from neighboring villages. These were broken up. The boathouse, where two more large canoes had been stored, was entered and the canoes smashed.

That gave Williams some idea of the reinforcements that had arrived, but he knew that most of them would range along the shore to prevent a raid from the schooner.

Every one in the party was familiar with the village. Williams knew about where to find whom he wanted. He carried with him two lanterns, to be lighted when needed, and at the head of the party started for the village.

A dog barked. Another. Another. It is nothing unusual for dogs to bark at any hour of the night. Crocodiles sometimes came up out of the mangrove-laced river, and dogs know how delicious their own meat is to those invulnerable monsters. Moreover, the dogs knew Williams and the men with him; so they did not bark ragefully but on principle. He calculated that those who heard would think some of the Willerby force was returning, but he knew how difficult it was to catch natives off guard and in the village street marched boldly, talking as if there was nothing to conceal.

Of course, the party was warned not to talk loud enough for words to be distinguished at any distance, for by words—but not by sounds—they could have been recognized. Such strategy as that is beyond the subtlety of savages.

THE order given the party was: kill whom you have to but take as many white people prisoners as you can—and make haste.

There was one particular hut that Williams wanted to get into. He was to give the signal for the dash to be simultaneously made on a number of huts.

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Gilbert Lang and Uala were together, and they had dropped to the end of the party to be farther from Williams. He would have sent her back to the boat. Gilbert Lang felt that she ought to go, but she was delightfully stubborn. She said in effect what Ruth said: whither thou goest, I will go.

The intimacies that develop in the prelude to dangers are very revealing and satisfying. There is a communion between two people, any two friends, particularly between a man and woman, at such times that does not seem to require the use of words, and he and Uala were, in that fearful way that is never absent from intense pleasure, strangely thrilled. They paused to tighten their arms about each other, and she clung to his neck even as they walked. Then, seeing how they had fallen behind, they would hasten up.

Williams lighted his lantern; Banoo his. Then they smashed straight through the doorway of Baraka's hut, and, before that frightened old creature could do more than shiver, Williams had dragged him from the mat, struck down to death the neophyte of the witch-man who sprang to assist his master, and had flung Baraka into the arms of a Samoan with instructions to take him at once to the beach.

The village was aroused. It had been deceived. It had not believed its dogs and had seen nothing suspicious in the march of men. Practically all of the best fighting men were with Willerby at the channel shore, but there were old men who could still use weapons well, and some of the younger warriors had preferred to slip back to the comfort of the huts rather than lie in rain under mats or lean-tos.

Williams' party rallied around the lanterns. It served to keep them together, but it also made them conspicuous targets. It takes some time—an appreciable amount of time—for a startled village to rally in the night. The villagers always imagine that there are innumerable attackers and are likely to flee first, then return with a bit of courage when they discover how few the actual number is.

The Samoans and Tongans did much to create terror. They yelled savagely and they fought savagely. Hut after hut was broken into, the lanterns flung up, the surprized black men—if any were there—instantly butchered. And truth requires the unpleasant statement that these aroused men did not always take the time needed to distinguish sex. The fight-fury was on them, particularly on the Tongans.

In some of the huts lanterns were hastily lighted at the first outcry. It is instinctive to make a light at the first disturbance, and these white women, uncomfortable, miserable in the dirty huts and rain-soaked village, had no thought of precaution. They lighted their lanterns.

Into one of them Williams bounded, carrying away the frail door by the impact of his body. Screams and shrieks and panic seemed unheard, unnoticed by him. Roughly, fiercely, quickly, he lashed the hands of what women he found behind them and dragged them out.

A door opened of itself not far from where Gilbert Lang and Uala were standing, a little bewildered at the fighting and noise.

"They've gone amuck!" said a hoarse, frightened voice. Then: "It's Williams! We'll have to get out of this, DuBeque."

Clamor and crying filled the air. The village was too far away—and, besides, the rain deadened the sound—to be heard by the warriors along the channel, but it was fearful as the night-panic that raiders make always is.

Then the man at the doorway opened up with a revolver. He fired, if not blindly, in the general direction of the shadows around the lantern some yards away. Gilbert Lang, scarcely thinking, shot toward the flashes from the other's gun, and the man howled, leaped from the doorway and dashed madly into the bush.

One of the Tongans who had taken the lantern from Banoo rushed up, thrust the lantern through the doorway and fell dead. He had been instantly shot by some one inside. The lantern dropped but did not go out.

Gilbert Lang was outside of its light. He was for the moment inactive, bewildered or, rather, awed by the sudden death of the Tongan. The uproar and shrieking increased.

A slender form came from the darkness, swift as a bird's shadow flashed across the pool of lantern light and disappeared into the black interior of the hut, but Gilbert Lang heard her voice.

"Paul, what has happened? What is the matter?"

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No answer. Again the woman's voice rose shrill and fearful:

"What has happened? Will we all be murdered?"

A rush of Tongans, attracted with moth-like directness to the fallen, burning lantern: their bodies tall, solid but lithe and oiled— the embodiment of fierceness. They saw their comrade dead: his position on the ground showed from where the blow or bullet had come.

Gilbert Lang sprang forward, without thinking, and cried:

"No—don't kill the woman! He did it—" and he thrust a gesture toward the inside of the hut to indicate that a man was there.

He had cried out from the impulse that is instinctive within some men: chivalry. In that moment he forgot who Lania DuBeque was: the widow of his murdered brother. He ignored unconsciously the chance that the fates had shunted upon him for vengeance.

The arm of Banoo, black and long, reached out as a serpent strikes and snatched the lantern from the ground, and through the doorway the Tongans flung themselves, heedless of the roaring gun. Another went down; another was hit; then the gun stopped.

Few of the huts have two doors. This one had. Paul DuBeque shot until he saw himself being overwhelmed; then he rushed out through the rear. But after him as the tiger leaps went Banoo. DuBeque turned a corner and came around the hut, his body silhouetted between Gilbert Lang and the lantern.

Gilbert Lang shot rapidly twice. Foolishly he shot while Banoo was in line of fire, but luck was with that son of Tongan chiefs.

DuBeque fell.

Banoo, the lantern uplifted with one hand, swung his rifle, butt down, against DuBeque's skull—and went on without stopping, wiping the rifle butt with palm and elbow as he went.

The lips of morning spoke, and there was a gray dawn. Nowhere, except in the tropics, may the Biblical line be understood: "And God said let there be light, and there was light." It comes like that—as if from a word spoken in heaven.

And with the dawn the fighting grew more fierce. The voice of Williams rallying his men for the boats rose like a trumpet blast. The rifles cracked angrily, and on the run the Samoans and Tongans made for the boat, hustling along the white women. Among them was Lania. She had been grabbed and dragged and flung almost headlong among the other woman, but, her hands not being tied, she caught out and steadied herself.

Some of the cannibals had rushed to the beach to cut off the boats, but the two men on guard at each pushed off from the beach and, with rifles against clubs and spears and the few bows, made an effective defense. There were no canoes left in which the natives could take to the water; so they gathered on the beach to cut off Williams. They were in numbers greatly superior, and it looked precarious.

BUT Williams charged, and with him went the fleet Tongans. After them Gilbert Lang, and by his side Uala, who carried a rifle picked up from a fallen man's hand. Right and left Williams shot from the hip and on the run, and, without a pause or a glance to see who was with him or how many, he leaped to close quarters. The rifle, grasped near the center, in his left hand was at once a club and a shield; in his right the knife flashed. He fought as a madman fights—excepting that he was silent.

As the natives gave way, he followed. He guarded blows and leaped aside from thrusts like one who is enchanted: not that he went unhit, unhurt, but nothing could stop him. He and his warriors beat a passage through the Gopassans, and then he turned to guard the rear, as the women were dragged—and half drowned—through the water to the boats that still stood clear of the beach.

The greatest danger was to come when he and his few men left in the rear-guard should turn their backs to make the boats themselves. From those boats rifles poured lead.

Gilbert Lang had not done much fighting. He had tried to keep close to Williams. A sudden loyalty, perhaps inspired by the words he had heard Banoo say had been told to him by his father, the chieftian, "In fight keep your back to king's breast. Die there," had attached Gilbert Lang to Williams. Also, there was gallant blood in the boy's body: blood that had come down from cavalier days, and, moreover,

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with almost conscious determination, deliberate resolution, he conceived that he had abandoned the world above the equator and was on the way to become a man of the South Seas.

He was, or thought he was, permanently attached to Williams. It was not easy to keep by Williams or near him. He accepted all odds. He hurled himself first in one direction, then in the other: leaped as if catapulted by some force outside of his own body. Banoo fought in much the same way: in Tonga chieftains had to be the best warriors. They could not, like nobles and lords and earls of the lands civilized, rest in honor on the virtue of hard-hitting ancestors. And all Tongans were fine warriors. But Banoo did not keep close to Williams.

He, too, accepted all odds, and the rapidity and accuracy with which he blocked and evaded blows and thrusts would have shown any one familiar with the South Seas in former days that Williams had not, as might be generally supposed, trained him in the art of combat but had himself been trained in the Tongan school of war. It has been said that a Tongan could dodge anything but a bullet—which was an exaggeration, as Banoo's bleeding body proved.

And it was Banoo who went down just as Williams had cried out to turn and dash for the boats into which the prisoners had been stowed. In the glance that Williams saw Banoo reel forward and fall from a blow struck from behind, he shouted the rallying cry and leaped along the sand.

One should have some familiarity with the fighting methods of the islanders to visualize the attack. Those methods differ much from white men's ways. In fact, excepting the Tongans and a few others, none of the natives understand or use the compact formations, and, moreover, most of the natives talk and brandish weapons and straggle out in a long line, even in the midst of battle. The Fijians, for instance, would put in a half day in spear's length of each other's army, boasting and flourishing their arms and scarcely strike a blow. Nor is the mêlée, when it comes, decimating.

Banoo had gone down while charging two warriors, and a third it was who, unnoticed, had been able to strike from behind. They could have killed him a half dozen times except that the three victors immediately began to prance around Banoo's prostrate body, proudly waving their clubs and spears and pretending to strike, yet hesitating because, once they had delivered the coup, the drama would be over; so they called and shouted loudly to attract attention.

Williams came on them as if blown by a gale; one went dead to the sand from a whirling blow of the rifle's butt; the knife dripped red into the throat of another, almost severing head from shoulders. But the natives along the line, seeing him pretty much alone and having been attracted by their comrades' cries of triumph, dashed in. The men in the boats could not shoot for Williams' immediate relief without the chance of hitting him. Some sprang from the boats and started to the rescue; others in the water and at the edge of the beach turned back. But at such times all is decided in the space of seconds, in split-seconds.

Williams was handicapped because he fought over the body of Banoo. He would not leave it. He would not, even to deliver a death-blow, draw far enough away for some one to run in and swing a club at the head of the prostrate, loyal man. Williams was almost circled, but the natives had a fearful respect for him. However, the chance for his death inspired them to boldness.

Then Gilbert Lang, from a few yards away and running, cried out to Williams—

"Behind—look out!"

Even as the words reached his ears, Williams, with remarkable swiftness of understanding and movement, wheeled, blocked a descending blow with the rifle and with an upward lunge of the long knife ripped the naked body before him from thigh to rib. And the next moment he was not alone; Gilbert Lang, breathing hard, with his lips drawn back over his teeth in a savage snarl, his eyes strained and gleaming, was into the fight by his side.

Then even Williams paused to glance over his shoulder as a high shrill voice right up behind him cried an Amazonian defiance. It was Uala. Her rifle spoke pointblank, and Gilbert Lang was freed from an old cunning warrior who was drawing the boy off guard by a feint. Gilbert Lang's rifle was empty; he had no time to reload. Uala's was now empty, too, and breast to breast with Gilbert Lang she took

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her place. The fury of a woman fighting by the side of one whom she loves was on her.

For the space of an instant Williams was bewildered as to how on earth Uala was there; then he guessed, and another cannibal took to the ground as mashed head for having run in too close while Williams seemed incautious.

Up came the Tongans, charging with the solidity of a squad; Williams leaped clear of Banoo's body, and the cannibals scattered before him as panicky children before an ogre.

Then began the shooting in a way very well understood by the Tongans, by three of them, who loaded while Williams fired as the little party gradually backed to the water's edge. Williams shot rapidly and, as he did everything, with unusual accuracy. He shot those nearest and yet frequently, a wicked gleam burning for a moment in his eyes, would take a longer shot to strike some running man. He loathed cowards—even among his enemies.

One of the boats drew closer to shore. Banoo was carried into it, and under cover of fire from both the boats Williams and the others waded and swam out.

The boats were rowed out of the bay, sails raised, for now it was light and the way clear, and they struck for the *Mary*. But they were yet to run the danger of passing in the small boats through the mouth of the narrow channel.

IT WAS a tired, almost exhausted party. Gilbert Lang's chest ached as if from a cruel beating. He could scarcely breathe, though he gasped and panted. Williams, breathing hard, too, but regularly, his muscular chest rising and falling like a bellows—showing by its inordinate expansion where he got his seemingly tireless strength and great driving-power—stood in the stern and, without seeming to, watched Gilbert Lang, who sat forward with his eyes shut, his head thrown back and mouth wide open.

Uala, too, weary and exhausted, was slumped in the bottom of the boat with her head on a thwart. Baraka, frightened but sullen, was forward—bundled there with three white women. One of them was Lania, and she, too, watched Gilbert Lang. The other women cried and cursed and prayed, hysterical, terrified. Lania's face reflected much of the stress she felt, but her eyes were tearless, and she neither cursed, prayed nor spoke.

Williams' was a hungry heart, the hungriest heart in the world. His was a life, for all the loyalty and gaiety of his natives, of the greatest possible loneliness. He was, both by his own hatred of them and their suspicions of him, shut off from white men; yet he was of the bone and blood of the white race, and he had brought some of its gems of culture, its books, with him into exile. Being a man of unusual intellectual powers and having had the training of education, knowing medicine, languages, mathematics and other things of science, he could not lose himself in the sloth and sensual comforts to which the South Seas have lured many men of culture and brains.

Nothing of love had continued to live in his heart, nothing but such ghosts as perhaps haunt every deserted mansion within the breasts of men, but in the hour of dawn, in ten seconds on the gray beach spotted with warm blood, his heart had been opened to Gilbert Lang. And what Williams gave he never took away or changed. He had learned that Gilbert Lang was not as other men, as other white men, whom he had known, and Williams, who had first been attracted by the boy's face and manner, by the refinement of them, a refinement as unconscious in him as in a child, had had every ounce and shred of his repressed affection released.

Presently Lania got up and, though a little unsteadied by the motion of the boat, moved with assurance toward Gilbert Lang. No one stopped her. The natives by whom she passed looked questioningly at Williams, but he gave no sign, and they let her go where she wished. She seemed indifferent to how the others stared or what they thought, so indifferent that, though no doubt conscious of their watchfulness, she did not look about her, else she might have felt a little uneasiness beneath the gaze of Williams.

He did not watch her continually, for again and again he bent over Banoo and anxiously scanned the bellying hardness of the sail in his impatience for speed, but again and again, too, his eyes were turned toward Lania, and in them was something of that steady fierceness noticeable in the eyes of a coiled snake.

"Thank you," said Lania in tones of incomparable sweetness and gratitude, "for saving my life."

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She had crouched down beside the boy.

Uala looked up with sudden surprize, her eyes darkened and her body alert with amazed jealousy. She did not move. She watched. Not all of the words spoken were intelligible to her simple vocabulary, but the broken threads of sentences she did not understand were, by her imagination, tied together.

Gilbert Lang looked at Lania. He was weary and showed it. He realized a number of things without specifically thinking of any of them: for instance, that she was, even in disarray, wondrously—not beautiful, perhaps, but fascinating. He did try to say to himself, "Here is that fiend—my murdered brother's Lilith of a wife." But he could only feel that he ought to feel harshly avenging toward her. He had no real desire to close his fingers on that beautiful slender throat until her eyes, dark and bright as polished jet, bulged from under their silken lids and her soul fled from between her red lips.

"You poor, dear boy," she said softly with infinite tenderness.

"You fiend," said Gilbert Lang emotionlessly, as if reassuring himself.

Lania did not flinch or shrink. She smiled sadly, wistfully, saying in words barely audible:

"I loved your brother as I have loved no man," and as she continued to speak, her words coming faster and faster in pleading, her hands gently crept up and closed on his fingers as if to hold him from running away until she had finished.

"Before God I am guiltless of what you think as an unborn child! Paul did it. And he terrified me. I was alone among strangers. Paul wanted the money, and he made me leave with him for fear I would tell and he would be hunted down and caught. He said he would swear that I did it if I did not leave with him! Boy, oh, you must believe me! I recognized you the first time I saw you. I knew who you were and why you had come, but I saved your life, anyway. You are so much like Frank—oh, Frank!"

Then it was that tears crept from her eyes, and her voice broke into soft sobs.

Uala, puzzled, unnoticed, looked anxiously from face to face. She did not understand.

"My father is dead. My mother lost her mind," Gilbert Lang muttered indecisively.

"What I have suffered! What I have suffered!" she moaned weakly.

"What you have made others suffer!" he replied tensely—defensively.

"Paul wanted to kill you—I warned you—I gave you the gun!"

Gilbert Lang was silent. That was true.

No one could have heard what was said between them, no one excepting the natives close to them, and there was anything but silence among those who sat between Lania and the two hysterical but curious women of her own company, who might have been interested in eventually carrying gossip to the jealous Willerby. They knew no more than Lania what was likely to be done with them, but their fears were scarcely greater, though hers was the greater ability to conceal them.

By virtue of the fact that she had warned Gilbert Lang and given him a gun on board the *Bebe*, he was likely to remember the debt, and through him Williams was likely to be more considerate. She was afraid of Williams. His was a personality that terrified her.

The explanation she had given Gilbert Lang, regarding his brother and herself and Paul, was more or less honest. There is a difference between truth and honesty. She was honest in believing that she had been forced by Paul to do as he said and did not in truth realize that, if she had deeply wished to prevent the crime, she would have found a way to do it. Her attitude had been one of reluctance, not of determination; of regret, not the passion of sorrow. She knew very well that the boy could not fail to be a little susceptible to her; all men were, excepting that dangerous enigma, Williams.

Right then Williams' voice cracked—

"DuBeque!"

With a frightened twitch she turned her face toward him.

"Go back there," and he made an abrupt gesture in the direction of the other women.

The insult was biting: "DuBeque," like a convict or low servant.

"That man means to murder me!" she whispered into Gilbert Lang's ear; then with an almost successful effort at unconcern she made her way to where Williams had pointed.

But Williams was not watching her. Just before he had spoken he had seen Uala's

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hand move slowly up along her breast; clenched in that hand was a knife, and her eyes were fastened on Lania's face. Now he saw Uala stealthily put the knife away and, turning, put her arms around the boy she loved.

XI

WILLIAMS won through the channel entrance easily. The watchful Gopassans sighted him and lined the beach but were warned back out of rifle-shot. Willerby, Jackson and the white men came rushing down with rifles and tried to encourage the natives to attack: if they could cut off or reach the boats they might be able to keep them from joining the ship, and had Willerby known in time that Williams was away he might have attempted by swimming to cut off the *Mary* and *Bebe*. But the news of the attack on the village had not been brought until after daylight, and then a sharp lookout was kept for the returning party.

Williams simply cupped his hands and shouted to the natives that if they made a hostile move, so much as shot one arrow at him, he would cut Baraka into bits and feed him to sharks. Then Baraka was permitted to stand up and tell by shouts and gestures of the horrible fate his ghost would bring upon them if they allowed him to be so treated. After that nothing could move the natives. They were more afraid of Baraka's ghost than of Willerby's curses.

And Willerby, too, was made afraid to shoot because the natives would then have been hostile to him, for he believed that Williams would do much as he had said with Baraka, and—native fashion—they would not have blamed Williams for slaughtering their devil-devil man, but Willerby.

So Williams, standing in the stern with a knife in his hand and Baraka beside him, sent the other boat through first, then followed, but he did not at once make for the ship. He came a little closer to the beach and called for Chief Ghorki and Willerby to come within talking distance.

Ghorki did. Willerby would not. He sent Jackson. It was beneath Willerby's dignity to treat with a pirate.

Williams did the talking. In plain words he said that every Samoan and Tongan, dead and alive in or around Gopassa, must be brought to the *Mary* by sundown, or he would kill Baraka. And for the benefit of Willerby he added that the women, too, would be butchered.

Jackson was much surprized at that horrible threat.

"Ain't like you, Williams," he said.

"It is like me, too," Williams answered tensely, convincingly.

Gilbert Lang shuddered, clenched his teeth and told his ancestors to be quiet; that Williams could not possibly mean it. And yet none who heard him could doubt that he actually meant it.

Lania blanched, for one of the few times in her life her face grew ashen, and the other women screamed inarticulately. Uala, her pretty face grim-set, glared at Lania and hoped even that her own uncle, a Gopassan prisoner, would not be brought back.

Williams said that if his demands were complied with his prisoners would be unharmed and released—but refuse, and they would be sliced to death inch by inch.

He was talking to brutal men, to men on whom euphemistic words could have no impact. His threat was ghastly, and it burned even into the brain of Jackson and shocked him.

Then Williams, without waiting to argue or dispute, shoved off and went to the ship.

On board he showed a paradoxical consideration for the people he had promised to butcher. Baraka was given a stiff drink of gin and food and placed on a pile of mats to smoke under the guard of two Tongans who stood some distance away and kept the curious at arm's length.

He separated Lania from the other women and, without seeming to care what they had or wanted, saw to it that they were made as comfortable as possible under the circumstances. He put Lania into his own room, although he did not speak to her, and put a native on guard at the door.

Lania was fearful of him. She watched him furtively, and it was all that she could do to keep from trembling visibly.

Williams gave his attention to the wounded Banoo, attending the injuries with a deftness and assurance not to be expected from a skipper; moreover his hands, rough and hard, were light and tender in probing, cleansing and dressing Banoo's wounds. Williams had some of his own, but he gave them no attention, not the slightest until his work was done.

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Banoo opened his eyes and smiled gratefully, murmuring something in his native tongue, and Williams' grim face relaxed into a smile, a smile of almost affection, that for the instant it remained peculiarly illuminated his fierce, implacable features.

"You'll probably have a stiff shoulder for months. That wad of hair saved your skull. Be quiet," he said brusquely as he left.

Lania paced up and down the cabin for a few minutes, her sharp pink finger-nails gouging into her palms. She had heard that Paul was dead, and she hoped it was true. There was a good sum of money deposited in a Sydney bank which would now come to her. That would make life worth living after she got away from Willerby—if she were ever returned to him. She was terrified by the thought that she might be taken back to Philadelphia and put on trial for the murder of Frank Lang.

One could not tell the first thing about what was in the mind of Williams. He had separated her from the other women: that looked as if he were to give her more attention than the others, and she did not want his attention. She was afraid of him. True, he had promised to release all of them on condition, but he might not keep his promise. There was no way to make him.

She thought of trying to bribe the natives, but that would be hazardous as well as inconvenient, since she had nothing to bribe them with and they could not speak fluent English.

She felt it was hopeless to appeal to Williams' mercy. Nothing remained but to appeal to Gilbert Lang. She really felt herself innocent in the crime of which he thought her guilty. But innocence was scarcely enough to justify the urgent plea for escaping.

In a chair she sat, her head dropped in thought. Gilbert Lang must feel somewhat grateful to her. That would help some. But there must be something more—and what?

Her wealth of hair was disheveled, and all she wore was a nightgown of silk, now soiled and torn in places. She searched about until she found a little broken mirror in which Williams perhaps met himself face to face occasionally, though he appeared to have clipped beard and hair without watching how it was done, and in this mirror she studied her features. She was not displeased with them. She was beautiful and knew it, and there were few men who could resist her.

Her lips were particularly attractive and enticing: firm and red—though now she bit them to aid the color—and quick to register any expression she summoned. Her eyes, too, dark and fathomless, satisfied her, and she now by way of experiment called into their ebon depths a light of wistfulness and quickly heaved her breast in sudden pants as if stricken with great emotion.

THEN she threw open the door of her cabin and waited. Natives, passing continually, stared at her as they went by. She could plainly hear their shouts and chatter on deck and wondered what they were about. At last she grew weary of waiting and spoke to the guard, but he did not answer her. Perhaps he did not understand English. Certainly he was not interested.

Lania was growing irritable, verging on to desperation, when Uala came by.

Uala stared at her boldly, appraisingly, scornfully. In other words, she was jealous, and in the South Seas or at St. James the jealous woman regards her rival with much the same expression.

Lania did not perceive the expression or, if she did, did not realize what it was. Her thoughts were intent on the request that she put to Uala.

"Will you tell Mr. Gilbert Lang to come here?"

Uala stopped and squarely faced this white siren. No, she was not like other white women. Not like the "afoola" women. Here was real rivalry. And she had spoken to Gilbert Lang and used the word "love": Uala understood "love." But the really unforgivable thing about Lania was her beauty.

"Who him?" asked Uala with every accent of stupidity.

"The young white boy. Please tell him to come quick."

"What you want him?"

"I want to talk to him. He is a friend, a very dear friend."

"Oh," said Uala. Then, "Him come I say you tell him?"

"Of course he will come. Go tell him, now!"

"Who you?" Uala demanded, curiosity getting a little the better of her anger as she came closer to compare Lania's mass of dark

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hair with her own, then reached out to finger the white silk.

Lania drew back impatiently.

"Do as I tell you. Ask Mr. Lang to come to me."

The brown girl trembled in a quick rage; for an instant it seemed that she might fly at Lania, tearing with teeth and nails.

That anger was too obvious for Lania to avoid perceiving, and she shrank back, frightened, but urgent.

"Tell him to come. I'll give you a fine present. I'll send it to you."

Uala said something contemptuous, then: "I tell 'im. An' if he come——"

She turned away without finishing the sentence.

And in a few minutes Gilbert Lang did come, alone.

Had he turned back as he stepped inside the cabin, and at Lania's suggestion closed the door, he would have seen the emotion-strained face of Uala peering down at him from the companionway. And, had either Gilbert Lang or Lania looked upward during the next few minutes, they would have seen the same face staring down at them through the skylight. Uala felt as if her heart were being torn out by the roots. The agony of utter misery was on her, and she wanted to take the world in her two little hands and tear it into fragments to hurl at the head of that strange white creature, Lania.

"Oh, Gilbert, Gilbert!" Lania cried, pathetically agitated—or seemingly so. "You must get me off this ship! Oh, that monster has put me here in his cabin and told me that I must be his woman or he will kill me!"

Gilbert Lang drew back unbelievingly, shocked.

Lania was a good actress.

"Oh, Gilbert, I know you think I am a terrible woman. All my poor, poor life I have been unfortunate. I loved your brother, Gilbert; I loved him! I loved your father and mother, and, though I never saw you, you were dear to me, very dear!"

It was not what she said so much as the almost incommunicable tenderness that she put into the words, particularly into "loved" and "dear." The softness of innocence confessing to a thrilling passion was in them.

"And to think I have come to this!" she cried.

"But Willerby?" the boy asked accusingly.

"Has been a father to me. A father, nothing more," she answered unhesitatingly. "I know that in many ways he is an evil man, Gilbert, and he has a fearful temper. But he has been kind and tender to me. He is all that I have in the world, the only friend I have ever had."

"But that gun you gave me—I might have shot him." Gilbert Lang was proving the susceptible, guileless boy she had expected.

"No, not him! No! Paul! It was Paul you had to fear. He recognized you. He tried to get Willerby to kill you, but I got W. W. to one side and begged him not to allow it. But I knew that Paul was desperate. I knew he might try. That was the way of it, Gilbert. I am not defending Willerby. But he has been a friend to me. And that is the way it was. Before God it is!"

She spoke rapidly, as if trying to get all of her words into his ears before he should have a chance to close them against her.

"I saved you, Gilbert. I risked my life to save you, for Paul would have killed me had he found out. I would have risked—I would have given my life to save poor Frank—" and she broke into tears—"but it—it was—too—late—and—and—Paul would have—have accused me of murdering him if I had—had—had not done as he told me to!"

Her chest heaved violently, and her sobs filled the cabin. She was inarticulate for some seconds, while Gilbert Lang, feeling very miserable, wondered what he ought to do. He did not believe her, and yet he scarcely could doubt. Tears are always convincing, and sobs are logic unanswerable.

"Oh, you don't believe me! You don't! What shall I do? What shall I do? Oh Gilbert, Gilbert, if you think I am such a terrible woman as that—here—" and standing before him she tore open the gown from her breast, exposing its naked beauty, and cried—"kill me! Kill me! Let me go to my God, who understands all things!"

Gilbert Lang drew back in horror from the invitation to do that very thing which he had half circled the earth to do.

"If you don't believe, strike me dead!" she cried again.

"No, no," he said simply, weakly, confused.

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"Then you do believe me! You do, don't you? Oh say you do, so I may know that I have one, one friend left on earth! You do believe me!"

"I guess so," he answered, scarcely knowing what he said but forced into such a reply by the adroitness of her logic: if you do believe in me, then you won't kill me.

SHE looked at him with radiant face, as one who has been acquitted of the death penalty, and flung out her arms in a gesture at once of gratitude and invitation, saying:

"From the moment I saw you, I loved—loved you—as a brother. Oh, you are dear to me, Gilbert. You are all I have in the world!"

"But Williams—" he said confusedly, reminding her of what she had told.

"You must save me from him. For Frank's beloved sake you must!"

"He said he would kill you if—if—" the boy could not bring himself to voice the charge.

"He did! Right here in this room, not over an hour ago. I said, 'Kill me!' "

And she dramatically straightened her shoulder and braced herself, head thrown back as if to receive the blow.

While Gilbert Lang did not think Williams would do such things as that, he yet remembered that Williams was likely to do anything. Williams was incomprehensible.

"I can't believe it," said Gilbert Lang simply, doubtfully.

"Oh, Gilbert, how can you doubt me! And am I to blame if men fall in love with me? What can I do? I hate them—hate them all—but you—" and as a hasty afterthought—"and W. W. He has been a father to me. You will get me off the ship, won't you, Gilbert? Remember, I saved your life. Oh, if I am on here when Williams sails away, I shall jump overboard—I will—I swear I will!"

"But he said that he would turn you all loose if——"

"He said he would. But will he? He won't let me go. Oh, Gilbert, he knows that you think—that you thought—I killed your brother, and he is trying to hold that over me to frighten me into doing what he wants. But before God, I am innocent—I am innocent—"and in the ecstasy of protestation her hands reached out and clung to Gilbert Lang.

It was then that Uala took her face from the skylight and flew to find Williams, who was with Banoo.

She spoke to him in short, vivid, furious sentences, and Williams without answering arose and went to the cabin.

He threw open the door.

Williams, almost naked, black-hued and tense, stood before them silent and motionless. His arms hung at his sides, but his fingers were hooked like claws. A terrifying gleam was in his narrowed gray eyes: a gleam such as might come through the mask of an executioner when some one whom he hated was, law-condemned, about to lay his head on the block.

"Get out!" said Williams at length to Gilbert Lang.

The boy did not move. The impulse to obey the command from those lips, which it seemed none could refuse, almost lifted him from the deck and carried him through the door. But he stayed rooted to the spot where he stood, but only by a very conscious effort of his will.

"Get out!" Williams repeated.

"I will not," said Gilbert Lang, awed by his own daring and scarcely knowing why he refused to go.

Williams looked at the boy steadily for some seconds, and each of those seconds Gilbert Lang expected to be suddenly jerked from his feet and hurled through the door. But he did not move. Williams did not move.

"So she has been lying to you," said Williams not unkindly, "and touched your gallantry. Well," he turned toward her, and his voice was hard, "what have you been telling him? That——"

"The truth!" she cried defiantly.

The chance to say that was too dramatic to be ignored.

"What?"'

"Nothing but the truth!" she repeated.

"What has she told you?" Williams asked of Gilbert Lang.

The boy answered a little uneasily but frankly—

"She says you told her she had to go with you as your woman or you would kill her!"

Not a muscle of Williams' face or body moved. He did not seem surprized. He did not seemed concerned. He did not even glance accusingly toward her. He did not glance toward her at all but simply

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continued to look steadily into the face of Gilbert Lang.

"Well?" said Williams after a time, as if waiting to hear what else.

"I didn't think you would do anything like that."

"Then you believe her?" It was the gentlest question that Gilbert Lang had ever heard him ask.

"Mr. Williams," the boy began resolutely, "she has explained how—I mean—oh, she had nothing to do with Frank's death!"

Williams smiled. True, it was a mirthless smile. But Gilbert Lang had never seen him smile before. There was something ominously unnatural in Williams' quietude.

"Do you know why you believe her?" Williams asked calmly, more as a tutor might inquire of a pupil touching something simple to one who has often learned the lesson. "It is because her hair isn't cut short and she hasn't a scarred cheek and a split lip!"

Lania screamed.

At once in a fury of fright she threw herself at Gilbert Lang, beseeching the boy not to let Williams mutilate her living body! No acting there—it was the horror of horror galloping through her brain.

Uala, attentive, at the door ventured to gaze inside. She had been listening. Now she stared.

Williams continued. His voice was calm, not high-pitched in the least, and yet it penetrated with force Gilbert Lang's ears despite Lania's wild crying that filled the cabin.

"The other accomplice that murdered your brother is dead, but it would mean nothing to merely kill her. Spoil her features, and the soul of your brother will rest in peace. You may throw your ring into the ocean—then. 'Vengeance is mine!' is too powerful a phrase to dally with. You called the demon of vengeance from the vasty depths, and that demon, unsatisfied, will eat your own heart out."

Lania, shaken, whirled toward Williams. She poured out sobs for mercy, cried her innocence and begged for pity. She threw out her long beautiful arms toward his shoulders, but he struck down her arms with a sweeping blow that left a bruise to tell where his arm had met her own. Her eyes peered anguishingly through her tear-laden lashes, but Williams remained silent, unmoved.

At last she cried in a kind of reaction from her futile, suppliant sobs:

"Who are you? Not your name. But who are you?"

"Pirate—nigger-lover—white cannibal," Williams answered readily.

"But before that—you must have had a mother, a sister—some one you loved—for her sake——"

"SOME one I loved?" Williams repeated slowly, yet so significantly that even Lania stood in sudden silence. "No."

A pause; then to Gilbert Lang:

"Has this woman told you of her life? I understand it is very interesting. I have been talking with our other lady guests. At sixteen she followed her convict lover to New Caledonia, seduced a governor to let him escape and a year later turned him back to the French officers. She was aweary of him."

"It isn't so! It isn't so!" Lania cried, forgetful of how much she was admitting even by her denial. "He tried to kill me!"

"Then," Williams went on with no attention to her, "she married a naval officer, Englishman, on duty at Melbourne. He was killed either by her or her lover when the officer surprized them together. Anyway, she testified that the lover was the murderer and went free."

Lania, her face gray as death, listened, frozen to silence. Who was there to have told him all these things? None. The other women did not know of them, or long ago they would have whispered them into Willerby's jealous ears.

"She was very young then and, even as now, very beautiful. Do you begin to understand what clipped hair, a scarred cheek and a split lip would have saved men? Sin left her as unmarked as if she had sold herself to the devil for the bloom of innocence.

"One thing followed another for a year or two. Then she met Clive Stanley and——"

Lania screamed. Of all the names of all the men that haunted her brain in the twilight, that of Clive Stanley was the most dreaded.

"That was—humm-m—about ten years ago. Yes, about ten years. Clive Stanley was a young man of considerable wealth who

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thought he had learned the wisdom of sorrow. He was a wandering student—a rich man who loved learning, and he met this woman. Look at her and imagine how much more beautiful she was ten years ago. Her lips were not so thin, so hard; her eyes were softer. She had a more beautiful name, too. Felice Armentier Watson. Watson was the name of her latest husband.

"Clive Stanley loved her. She saw to it that he would. Clive Stanley carried her off, fearful that the husband would follow. But he did not. She had seen to it that he would not. The hounds of the law followed hard, for the husband had been left dead. Up and down the world they went, and at last for a little respite he took her and went to the home of his best friend, one of the few that had continued to love Clive Stanley. And she and this friend plotted together, and Clive Stanley was given over to handcuffs and leg-irons and carried back to Sydney for trial.

"Some say he was hanged until dead, and some say that his neck wasn't broken; that the doctor, impatient to get home to his supper, had him cut down too soon so that, when Clive Stanley stirred in his shroud of burlap that convict grave-diggers were about to drop into a hole, their hearts were moved for pity—they hid him, and from that day to this nothing has been heard of Clive Stanley."

"Who are you?" she cried hoarsely.

But Williams did not hear. He continued to talk to Gilbert Lang, and he talked naturally, with no show of emotion, scarcely tense, strained as usual.

"Her precious cousin, sometimes her brother, sometimes her husband, also served a term and was released from New Caledonia and joined her. They preyed north and south and finally joined Winston Willerby. Later she lured into love a young Englishman—Ballantyne, I believe—and Willerby killed him and would have killed her, too. Willerby has good judgment in women at times. But she got away. You know the rest."

"Don't believe him! Don't believe him!" she cried and again passionately leaped into her story: Paul DeBeque was the monster, she merely the maiden helpless in his evil sorcery.

"It would do no good to kill her body," Williams went on; "she could be happy, if she thought men would sigh, 'How beautiful!' as she lay in her coffin."

Gilbert Lang was like a man in a trance. He believed Williams. There was no doubting him. The man had spoken as dispassionately, as impersonally, as if relating the evil history of some medieval witch-maiden. But a thought that hummed in Gilbert Lang's brain was: How did Williams know all these things? Williams had talked with the other women, but what he had just said seemed to come from first-hand knowledge, or much of it, rather than the mumbling of hearsay.

But Lania was more troubled by that very thought than Gilbert Lang. She knew that the other women could not have told so much—anything like so much.

"Where did you hear all that—those lies?" she asked, trembling in fear of what answer he might make.

"Gossip runs far and free in South Sea ports—especially in the ones I make."

"No, you—you can't be he—no!" she said reassuringly aloud as she scrutinized his bearded face.

"No," Williams repeated. "I can't be."

And Gilbert Lang, by some strange perception more vivid at that moment than words, knew both were thinking of Clive Stanley: and the denial of both made him wonder then and there if Williams were not Clive Stanley.

"He is dead," she said again aloud, speaking more to herself than to them.

"He is dead," Williams answered calmly.

And for moments the three stood in silence, each communing with inmost thoughts. But only Williams stood relaxed, at ease. The storm and stress that ever rode him had vanished, at least for the time. He looked from one to the other as a spectator might glance at two pictures in a gallery.

"What are you going to do with me?" Lania asked pathetically, sinking into a chair and staring piteously at Williams.

"I? Nothing. But from where this boy came there is a father and a son in the family vault. In an asylum there is a madwoman: wife and mother. Here—" said Williams to Gilbert Lang, extending to him a knife—"a score of dead men cry out to you to mar and mark her. You are the only one that has ever stood face to face with her and remained innocent. God might forgive you!"

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The nervous fingers of the boy closed over the knife, and he drew it toward him, watching her all the while. Then he glanced down, looked for a ticking of seconds at the knife as if wondering what it was and how it came there: and it fell from his hand.

"He has pronounced judgment," said Williams, stooping to the blade. "Once again the devil has saved you."

With a cry of joy, thankfulness, Lania flung herself at Gilbert Lang. Her arms went about his neck, her mass of hair swept over his head, like a vampire smothering down a victim that could not be lured. She probably did not actually know what she was doing: perhaps for the moment she was crazed with relief and could show her gratitude in no way but the way of woman—by caresses. Her kisses fell on his face and neck with swift passion, and Gilbert Lang struggled as a man struggles in a dream, unable to break through the force that seems to hold him from within.

TO BE CONCLUDED

"TOBEY" RIDDLE, HEROINE OF THE MODOC WAR

BY E. A. BRININSTOOL

BOWED with the weight of many "snows," there still lives on the Modoc Indian reservation at Yainax, Oregon, a woman of that tribe who was one of the most conspicuous figures in the terrible Modoc War of 1872-73.

This is "Tobey" Riddle, whose Indian name is Wi-ne-ma. Wi-ne-ma was married when a young girl to a white man named Frank Riddle, who was a pioneer settler of that region. With her husband, Tobey acted as an interpreter between the Modocs and the soldiery during the most expensive Indian war ever waged in this country. The Modocs, numbering fifty-eight fighting warriors, with their old men, women and children, had refused to live on the Klamath Indian reservation because of tribal differences, and after some trouble with soldiers and settlers, had retreated to the Lava Beds, on the border of Oregon and California.

Much fighting was done, but the Modocs refused to surrender, although a thousand soldiers had surrounded their stronghold. Several "peace talks" were indulged in, but neither side could agree on terms. Finally the Modocs revolted among themselves, and against the wishes and strong council of Captain Jack, their chief, decided to murder the peace commissioners at the next powwow. Tobey Riddle was advised by a friendly Modoc of the contemplated assassination, and warned the commissioners repeatedly not to meet the Modocs in council again.

This warning was lightly disregarded, and on April 11, 1873, the peace commissioners, Gen. E. R. S. Canby, Rev. E. Thomas, L. S. Dyer and Col. A. B. Meacham, all well-known to the Modocs, accompanied by Frank and Tobey Riddle as interpreters, met the Modoc chief at the council tent half-way between their stronghold and the camp of the soldiers. Both sides had agreed to come unarmed, but the Modocs all carried revolvers under their blankets.

After a short but unsatisfactory talk, Captain Jack, who had been forced by his braves to take part in the murders under threats of death, suddenly drew his revolver and shot and killed General Canby. Rev. Thomas also was killed, but Dyer escaped by his fleetness of foot. Col. Meacham was shot seven times, but none of his wounds proved fatal. Then a Modoc warrior started to tear off his scalp, when Tobey Riddle flung herself on Meacham's body, fighting the brave off and shouting that "soldiers are coming!" The Modocs then all fled back to their stronghold. Meacham eventually recovered from his wounds. Seventeen years later the United States Government granted to the brave Tobey a pension of twenty-five dollars a month for life for her extraordinary bravery and heroism.

Later she became a teacher and missionary among her own people, accomplishing much toward keeping them in the white man's road, and to-day she sits among her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, loved and revered.

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RILEY GRANNAN'S LAST ADVENTURE ~AND AFTER

An Article by
Sam C Dunham

NOTE.—This is not fiction. On the face of it, it has no place in a magazine designed to entertain, for it is a funeral sermon. Yet, because its human appeal is so strong, it was published in this magazine over seven years ago—the issue of January, 1912. That issue was quickly exhausted by the demand for copies of this sermon, and through the years demands for it have continued to come in, demands we could not fill. As you may have noticed in one of our service departments, as much as five dollars has been offered for a single copy of the magazine containing it.

So it seems only common sense to give to the reading public what is so urgently desired and is unobtainable except through this magazine. Only once before have we republished anything from our own pages—Talbot Mundy's "The Soul of a Regiment." Its second appearance was warmly greeted, so much so that a readers' vote ranked it ninth among all the stories published by us during 1917. We believe that these words spoken by the Rev. Mr. Knickerbocker over the dead body of Riley Grannan will be equally valued by readers new and old.—THE EDITORS.

IN THE desert mining-camp of Rawhide, Nev., in the Spring of 1908, there was spoken over the body of a race-track gambler one of the most eloquent panegyrics that has been heard in this generation. That no more highly finished and impressive eulogy had been pronounced at the bier of any man since the immortal discourse of Robert G. Ingersoll at the grave of his brother, was the opinion of the men who heard it—and there were men in that audience whose opinion was worth while.

The man who delivered the oration was Herman W. Knickerbocker, an itinerant minister of the Gospel, prospector and mine promoter. It was spoken over the body of Riley Grannan, whose meteoric career as a race-track plunger for years furnished sensations for the newspapers.

The "atmosphere" of the occasion was unique. For an environment there was the bleak, windswept desert; for an audience, a motley crowd of adventurers drawn from almost every clime by the lure of gold; for a theme, the life, not of a multimillionaire, dying peacefully and full of honors in a Fifth Avenue mansion, but of a "busted" gambler, losing his "last chips" in a miner's shack—and the orator, not an overpaid pastor of a billion-dollar congregation, but a humble wanderer from the fold.

The rush of fifty thousand gold-seekers into Rawhide in the Spring of 1908 brought together as remarkable an aggregation of men as ever gathered in so short a time in any mining-camp. As if by magic there sprang up a thriving, noisy, bustling city of twelve thousand where a few months before the only sound that ever broke the immemorial silence of the desert was the weird cry of the coyote holding its night-long vigil in the barren, ghostly hills.

From the four corners of the world and its intervening spaces had come mining engineers of international reputation, young mine promoters, real-estate dealers, millionaire mine operators, merchants, lawyers, journalists, preachers—representatives of every profession and calling—all lured by the irresistible magic of the four-lettered word, "gold."

There were many distinct individual types—men of rare talent, even of genius, others that were ordinary and some very common. On the whole, however, the camp of Rawhide, at its inception, before the advent of the riffraff of camp-followers, contained as fine a body of men as ever foregathered in the West. They represented

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the true democracy of character which our "higher civilization" has so signally failed to produce in our overgrown cities. Those who live in the artificial atmosphere of a great city can not realize how much the natural—which are the good—impulses of the race dominate individuals in all the relations of life in our Western mining-camps. There the search for gold does not have the demoralizing effect that the frenzy for money-grabbing has in the big cities. There, instead of stifling all the finer sentiments—turning men into selfish beasts—as it does in so many instances in a big town, it has the opposite effect, making them generous, big-souled and humane. There you find all the sterling qualities playing forcefully all the time—divine charity, the greatest thing in the world, and all the good things that grow out of it.

Among the first to be attracted to the camp was Herman W. Knickerbocker. Mr. Knickerbocker was born in Louisiana, the son of an eminent jurist. At the age of twenty-one he was ordained a Methodist minister and became the pastor of a fashionable congregation in New Orleans. He was soon "called" to the Trinity M. E. Church in Los Angeles, where he quickly earned a reputation as one of the most eloquent pulpit orators on the Pacific Coast. His broad and liberal views proved unacceptable to the leaders of the church, however, and he was tried for heresy but was acquitted. He then resigned.

Having marked dramatic talent, Mr. Knickerbocker decided to adopt the stage as a profession. With this end in view he went to Tonopah in the Spring of 1903 and there erected the Tonopah Opera-House. This enterprise was in advance of the demand for dramatic entertainment, however, and the opera-house reverted to the Tonopah Lumber Company, sharing the fate of many other too ambitious structures in that camp.

Mr. Knickerbocker then went to work as a common miner and labored underground in the Tonopah mines for four dollars a day to support his wife and four children.

DURING his stay in Tonopah Mr. Knickerbocker occasionally gave evidence that he was obsessed with deep-seated and well-nigh overmastering melancholy. He had a lovable, child-like disposition which endeared him to all who knew him. He was usually cheerful, even optimistic, but at times it required all his fortitude to overcome this tendency to melancholy. On one occasion, while he was trying to raise money to do the location work on his Goldfield claims, he went to "Diamondfield" Jack Davis, the most picturesque and one of the most generous characters in camp, and offered to sell him a Colt .45 for a few dollars.

"Jack, I don't know whether to sell this gun or to blow my brains out with it," Mr. Knickerbocker said.

Jack, who only a few years before had been sentenced to be hanged for the alleged killing of a sheep-herder up in Idaho but had been pardoned, replied:

"Knick, old boy, you mustn't talk that way. Guns are made to blow the other feller's brains out. You just let me take care o' your'n till you feel better, an' here's fifty dollars to cheer you up a bit. An' don't never talk to me again about usin' a gun on the wrong man."

When the first news of the great gold strike at Goldfield was brought to Tonopah, Mr. Knickerbocker joined the rush to the new district and located several claims. To provide money to do the location work required by law to hold his claims, he gave a series of Shakespearian readings in Goldfield and Tonopah which were both financially and artistically successful. In these readings his impersonations of "Macbeth" and of two or three other characters showed that he possessed dramatic powers that would have assured him a successful career in the legitimate drama.

Within two years Mr. Knickerbocker made his clean-up and left Goldfield with a fortune of about three hundred thousand dollars. For a year he was lost sight of by the people of the camp, but somewhere he must have been an active factor in financial affairs, for at the end of that time he returned to Goldfield broke.

He was among the first to join the stampede to the new camp of Seven Troughs, in northern Nevada, and was the first to make a big clean-up there.

Half a year later, when the news of the Rawhide discoveries was brought to Reno, Mr. Knickerbocker was found to be "in the thick of it" once more.

Still later, when the camp was at the height of its boom, came Riley Grannan,

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the famous race-track plunger, who opened a gambling-house that for a time was the most popular resort in the camp. Here some of the biggest stakes ever wagered in the West passed over the tables.

Mr. Grannan, who had made and lost several fortunes on the turf, was dead broke when he reached Reno on his way to Rawhide. He had spent the Winter in San Francisco. When the newspapers began to print the sensational news sent out from Rawhide by the press agents, he saw in these dispatches the name of Nat. C. Goodwin, who was the leading operator in the camp. He learned that George Graham Rice was in Reno with the mine-promoting firm of Nat. C. Goodwin & Co. Having known both in his race-track days, he decided to go to Reno and ask them to "stake" him to open a gambling-house in Rawhide.

It is a very common thing in the West for men to stake one another to go into business, particularly when the man asking for a stake has been successful in his line of endeavor. The Tonopah Club of Tonopah had made millions for George Wingfield and his partners. The Northern at Goldfield had made big fortunes for "Tex" Rickard and his associates. What more natural than to believe that a gambling-house in Rawhide, managed by so well-advertised a character as Riley Grannan, would become the most profitable enterprise of its kind in the camp and make a fortune for its owner? It did not take Mr. Grannan long to convince Mr. Goodwin and Mr. Rice that it was good business to stake him and that it was more than likely he would repay them handsomely.

They supplied him with a twenty-thousand-dollar bankroll, taking his notes, without interest, for the amount. First, however, they tried to dissuade him from going to Rawhide. He was just recovering from a long illness and was feeble. They feared he could not stand the rigors of the climate. But he was persistent. He said he could stand any climate "this side of hell." He offered them an interest in the business. They refused to accept it. Their only condition was, "Return the money when you can."

The enterprise was not a financial success. From the start Mr. Grannan played in bad luck. His resort was jammed with players day and night, but he was a steady loser.

ONE cold, stormy night, unheedful of the warnings of friends, Mr. Grannan walked out of his gambling-house, after a six hours' sitting at poker, and "took in the town" without wearing an overcoat. As a result of the exposure he fell an easy victim to the prevailing scourge—pneumonia.

When news of Mr. Grannan's illness reached Reno, late the next night, Mr. Rice rushed a noted physician across the desert one hundred and fifty miles to Rawhide in an automobile, at a cost of five hundred dollars. But the physician's efforts were unavailing. Riley "cashed in."

Mr. Goodwin and Mr. Rice defrayed the expenses of Riley's illness and funeral and sent his body to the old home in Kentucky for interment. The bill was eighteen hundred dollars. But no word of their unostentatious generosity in this instance, as in many others that might be cited, was ever given to the press, although they had their grip on the press-agenting of the camp. When the final curtain fell on Riley Grannan's Rawhide drama, his "angels" had expended about twenty-two thousand dollars on the disastrous venture.

Whenever a miner died in Rawhide, Mr. Knickerbocker officiated at the funeral. The ceremonies on these occasions, although of the simplest character, were always rendered impressive by his heart-stirring words. Therefore no one in Rawhide was surprized when it was announced that Mr. Knickerbocker would perform the rites over the departed race-track plunger.

Indeed, it was most fitting that Herman W. Knickerbocker should say the last words at the bier of Riley Grannan. The two men, born and reared under such different circumstances and following callings so widely divergent, were yet strangely akin in temperament and experiences.

Mr. Knickerbocker was nurtured in luxury and educated for the higher walks of life. He had been the brilliant and idolized pastor of two fashionable congregations. But he had fallen by the wayside, had risen and had fallen again.

Mr. Grannan was born of poor parents. He began life as a bell-boy in a Louisville hotel. He was drawn to the race-track by listening to the talk of horsemen when they gathered in Louisville twice a year to attend the races. His career on the race-track was meteoric. But poverty and

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hardship were nothing new to him.

There was much in common between the two men. Both were generous to a fault. Many stories are told of Mr. Knickerbocker's open-handed generosity to the needy while he lived in Tonopah and Goldfield. It is a tradition of the race-tracks that no one ever applied to Mr. Grannan for aid and was turned away. After Mr. Knickerbocker left the ministry and made his fortune in Goldfield, he ran the gamut of a sporting life. There was in the nature of each a keen appreciation of the higher things of life, and neither had sunk so low as not to be able to rise again. No one could realize better than Mr. Knickerbocker the heights and depths of such a nature as Mr. Grannan's.

The funeral was typical of a new mining-camp. There was no hearse. The remains were conveyed in an express wagon from the undertaker's tent to the improvised chapel, a variety theater at the rear of the saloon. There gathered an audience so remarkable in aspect that it probably could not be duplicated anywhere else on earth. Men and women of every social station and grade closely commingled. A solemn hush hovered over the strange assembly. Dead silence reigned where a few hours before half-drunken auditors boisterously applauded the ribald jest and obscene songs of low-grade variety actors. But around the bier was gathered a throng of as sincere mourners as ever assembled at the coffinside of a departed friend.

THE eulogy pronounced by Mr. Knickerbocker was powerfully dramatic. His appearance was in keeping with the scene. Clad in the rough garb of a miner and wearing high boots, he looked the part of a typical pioneer. He deeply felt his subject. His eyes were dimmed with tears, and at times his voice was choked by emotion.

Mr. Knickerbocker spoke without notes. A stenographic report of the oration was made by W. P. de Wolf, a well-known California newspaper man, and sent to Reno the same evening without revision by Mr. Knickerbocker.

Standing on a dais beside the catafalque, with one hand lightly touching the forehead of the dead man and the other uplifted, Mr. Knickerbocker told his auditors he proposed to show the deceased to have been a "dead-game sport" and that he had not lived his life in vain. He went on thus:

I FEEL that it is incumbent upon me to state that in standing here I occupy no ministerial or prelatic position. I am simply a prospector. I make no claims whatever to moral merit or to religion, except the religion of humanity, the brotherhood of man. I stand among you today simply as a man among men, feeling that I can shake hands and say "brother" to the vilest man or woman that ever lived. If there should come to you anything of moral admonition through what I may say, it comes not from any sense of moral superiority but from the depths of my experience.

Riley Grannan was born in Paris, Ky., about forty years ago. I suppose he dreamed all the dreams of boyhood. They blossomed into phenomenal success along financial lines at times during his life. I am told that from the position of a bell-boy in a hotel he rose rapidly to be a celebrity of world-wide fame. He was one of the greatest plungers, probably, that the continent has ever produced.

He died day before yesterday in Rawhide.

This is a very brief statement. You have the birth and the period of the grave. Who can fill the interim? Who can speak of his hopes and fears? Who can solve the mystery of his quiet hours that only he himself knew? I can not.

He was born in the sunny Southland—in Kentucky. He died in Rawhide.

There is the beginning and the end. I wonder if we can see in this a picture of what Ingersoll said at the grave of his brother—"Whether it be near the shore or in mid-ocean or among the breakers, at last a wreck must mark the end of one and all."

He was born in the sunny Southland, where brooks and rivers run musically through the luxuriant land; where the magnolia grandiflora, like white stars, glow in a firmament of green; where crystal lakes dot the greensward and the softest Summer breezes dimple the wave-lips into kisses for the lilies on the shore; where the air is resonant with the warbled melody of a thousand sweet-voiced birds and redolent of the perfume of many flowers. This was the beginning. He died in Rawhide,

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where in Winter the shoulders of the mountains are wrapped in garments of ice and in Summer the blistering rays of the sun beat down upon the skeleton ribs of the desert. Is this a picture of universal human life?

Sometimes, when I look over the circumstances of human life, a curse rises to my lips, and, if you will allow me, I will say here that I speak from an individual point of view. I can not express other than my own views. If I run counter to yours, at least give me credit for a desire to be honest.

When I see the ambitions of man defeated; when I see him struggle with mind and body in the only legitimate prayer he can make to accomplish some end; when I see his aim and purpose frustrated by a fortuitous combination of circumstances over which he has no control; when I see the outstretched hand, just about to grasp the flag of victory, take instead the emblem of defeat, I ask, What is life? What is life? Dreams, awakening and death; "a pendulum 'twixt a smile and a tear;" "a momentary halt within the waste and then the nothing we set out from;" "a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more;" "a tale told by an idiot; full of sound and fury, signifying nothing;" a child-blown bubble that but reflects the light and shadow of its environment and is gone; a mockery, a sham, a lie, a fool's vision; its happiness but Dead Sea apples, its pain the crunching of a tyrant's heel. I feel as Omar did when he wrote—

"We are no other than a moving row
Of magic shadow-shapes that come and go
Round with the sun-illumed lantern held
In midnight by the Master of the show;

"But helpless pieces of the game he plays
Upon this checker-board of night and days,
Hither and thither moves and checks and slays,
And one by one back in the closet lays.

"The ball no question makes of ayes and noes,
But here or there as strikes the player goes;
And He that toss'd you down into the field,
He knows about it all—He knows—HE KNOWS."

But I don't. This is my mood.

Not so with Riley Grannan. If I have gaged his character correctly, he accepted the circumstances surrounding him as the mystic officials to whom the universe had delegated its whole office concerning him. He seemed to accept both defeat and victory with equanimity. He was a man whose exterior was as placid and gentle as I have ever seen, and yet, when we look back over his meteoric past, we can readily understand, if this statement be true, that he was absolutely invincible in spirit. If you will allow me, I will use a phrase most of you are acquainted with. He was a "dead-game sport." I say it not irreverently but fill the phrase as full of practical human philosophy as it will hold, and I believe that, when you can say one is a "dead-game sport," you have reached the climax of human philosophy.

I believe that Riley Grannan's life fully exemplified the philosophy of these verses:

"It's easy enough to be happy
When life flows along like a song;
But the man worth while
Is the man who will smile
When everything goes dead wrong.

"For the test of the heart is trouble,
And it always comes with the years.
And the smile that is worth
The homage of earth
Is the smile that shines through tears."

I know that there are those who will condemn him. There are those who believe today that he is reaping the reward of a misspent life. There are those who are dominated by medieval creeds. To those I have no word to say in regard to him. They are ruled by the skeleton hand of the past and fail to see the moral beauty of a character lived outside their puritanical ideas. His goodness was not of the type that reached its highest manifestations in any ceremonial piety. His goodness, I say, was not of that type but of the type that finds expression in the handclasp; the type that finds expression in a word of cheer to a discouraged brother; the type that finds expression in quiet deeds of charity; the type that finds expression in friendship, the sweetest flower that blooms along the dusty highway of life; the type that finds expression in manhood.

He lived in the world of sport. I do not mince my words. I am telling what I believe to be true. In the world of sport—hilarity sometimes, and maybe worse. He left the impress of his character on this world, and through the medium of his financial power he was able with his money to brighten the lives of its inhabitants.

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He wasted it, so the world says. But did it ever occur to you that the most sinful men and women who live in this world are still men and women? Did it ever occur to you that the men and women who inhabit the night-world are still men and women? A little happiness brought into their lives means as much to them as happiness brought into the lives of the straight and the good. If you can take one ray of sunlight into their night-life and thereby bring them one single hour of happiness, I believe you are a benefactor.

Riley Grannan may have "wasted" some of his money in this way.

Did you ever stop and think how God does not put all His sunbeams into corn, potatoes and flowers? Did you ever notice the prodigality with which He scatters these sunbeams over the universe? Contemplate:

God flings the auroral beauties round the cold shoulders of the North, hangs the quivering picture of the mirage above the palpitating heart of the desert, scatters the sunbeams like gold upon the bosoms of myriad lakes that gem the verdant robe of nature, spangles the canopy of night with star-jewels and silvers the world with the reflected beams from Cynthia's mellow face, hangs the gorgeous crimson current of the Occident across the sleeping-room of the sun, wakes the coy maid of dawn to step timidly from her boudoir of darkness to climb the steps of the Orient and fling wide open the gates of the morning. Then, tripping over the landscape, kissing the flowers in her flight, she wakes the birds to herald with their music the coming of her king, who floods the world with refulgent gold. Wasted sunbeams, these? I say to you that the man who by the use of his money or power is able to smooth one wrinkle from the brow of care, is able to change one moan or sob into a song, is able to wipe away one tear and in its place put a jewel of joy—this man is a public benefactor. I believe that some of Riley Grannan's money was "wasted" in this way.

We stand at last in the presence of the Great Mystery. I know nothing about it, nor do you. We may have our hopes, but no knowledge. I do not know whether there be a future life or not. I do not say there is not. I simply say I do not know. I have watched the wicket-gate close behind many and many a pilgrim. No word has come back to me. The gate is closed. Across the chasm is the gloomy cloud of death. I say I do not know. And, if you will allow this expression, I do not know whether it is best that my dust or his at last should go to feed the roots of the grasses, the sagebrush or the flowers, to be blown in protean forms by the law of the persistence of force, or whether it is best that I continue in personal identity beyond what we call death. If this be all, "after life's fitful fever, he sleeps well . . . Nothing can harm him further." God knows what is best.

This may be infidelity, but, if it is, I would like to know what faith means. I came into this universe without my volition—came and found a loving mother's arms to receive me. I had nothing to do with the preparation for my reception here. I have no power to change the environment of the future, but the same power which prepared the loving arms of a mother to receive me here will make proper reception for me there. God knows better than I what is good for me, and I leave it with God.

If I had the power today by the simple turning of my hand to endow myself with personal immortality, in my finite ignorance I would refuse to turn my hand. God knows best. It may be that there is a future life. I know that sometimes I get very tired of this life. Hedged and cribbed, caged like a bird caught from the wilds, that in its mad desire for freedom beats its wings against the bars only to fall back in defeat upon the floor—I long for death, if it will but break the bars that hold me captive.

I was snowbound in the mountains once for three days. On account of the snow we had to remain immediately alongside the train. After three days of this, when our food had been exhausted, the whistle blew that meant the starting of the train out into the world again. It may be that death is but the signal whistle that marks the movement of the train out into the broader and freer stretches of spiritual being.

As we stand in the presence of death we have no knowledge, but always, no matter how dark the gloomy clouds hang before me, there gleams the star of hope. Let us hope, then, that it may be the morning star of eternal day. It is dawning somewhere all the time. Did you ever pause

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to think that this old world of ours is constantly swinging into the dawn? Down the grooves of time, flung by the hand of God, with every revolution it is dawning somewhere all the time. Let this be an illustration of our hope. Let us believe, then, that in the development of the human soul, as it swings forward toward its destiny, it is constantly swinging nearer and nearer to the sun.

And now the time has come to say good-by. The word "farewell" is the saddest in our language. And yet there are sentiments sometimes that refuse to be confined in that word. I will say, "Good-by, old man. We will try to exemplify the spirit manifested in your life in bearing the grief at our parting. Words fail me here. Let these flowers, Riley, with their petaled lips and perfumed breath, speak in beauty and fragrance the sentiments that are too tender for words. Good-by."

THERE wasn't a dry eye in the audience when Mr. Knickerbocker finished his masterly discourse. Some of those present, indeed, acted as if spellbound. Surprize at the remarkable performance of the orator was depicted on the countenances of the thoughtful among the hearers.

The coffin was carried to a motor-truck, which was to convey it to the railroad. Silently the pall-bearers, selected from the most prominent residents of the camp, took their places behind the improvised hearse. Then the funeral cortège, embracing nearly every man and woman in Rawhide, slowly wound its way down the cañon beneath a Wintry desert sky.

At the foot of the cañon the procession halted and dispersed, while the motor-truck proceeded across the desert to the railroad station, thirty miles away, whence the body of Riley Grannan was transported to the old home in Kentucky, to be laid to rest "where the magnolia grandiflora, like white stars, glow in a firmament of green; where crystal lakes dot the greensward and the softest Summer breezes dimple the wave-lips into kisses for the lilies on the shore; where the air is resonant with the warbled melody of a thousand sweet-voiced birds and redolent of the perfume of many flowers."

TIME TO GO

BY LEO HAYS

WHEN you get up nervous and loose in the feet,
And you hate the sight of the same old street—
When the soft wind says, "Come on, let's go,"
It's time to go, bo, time to go.

When you can't eat right, and you can't sleep right,
And you're dreaming at noon and awake all night;
When you sit and stare at the empty wall,
And you think for a nickel you'd drop it all—

For the dusty road and the sun conspire
With the fresh dawn-wind to set you afire,
Till you're sick for a glimpse of a sea and a hill—
(Do the tramps run down to Rio still?)

Down there in the lands of old desire
Is a sickle of beach with a palm-tree choir,
And a girl— Blow on, you tramp-wind, blow—
I tell you, bo, you've *got* to go!

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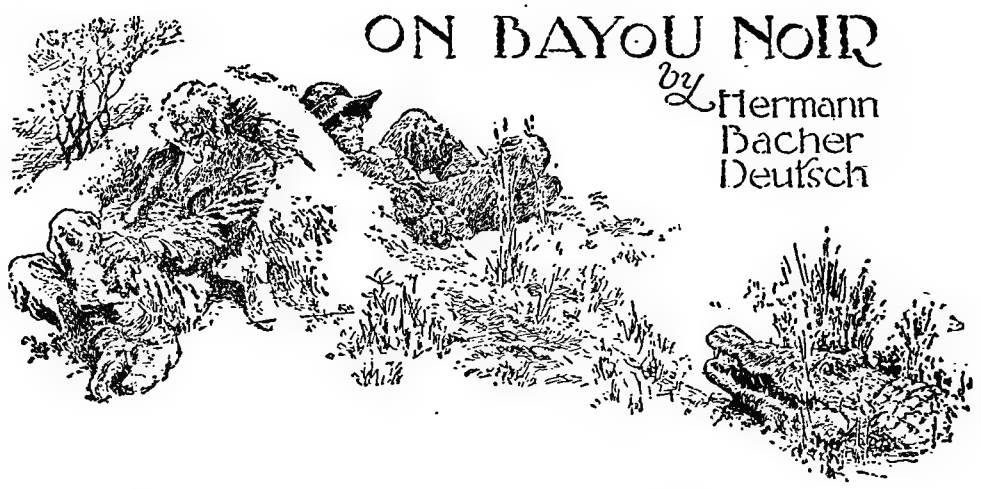

ON BAYOU NOIR

by Hermann Bacher Deutsch

SHIFTING the heavy pack upon his shoulders so that the weight might be more evenly distributed, Larry Lavigne trudged steadily down the soft brown mud road. Far ahead through the heat-laden haze of the Summer day he could see the slightly denser pall which overhung one point in the green swamp-prairie, marking the site of a Malay shrimping village. Two miles beyond this was the store of Valmont Basile on Bayou La Barre.

Basile was virtually the autocrat of the folk who lived far-flung about Bayou La Barre. In reality his store was a trading-post. Once a week his launch left the post for distant Bayou Teche, whence the big freight packets conveyed the goods he shipped to New Orleans—at a smart profit, too, for Valmont charged for the shipping in addition to his commission as trader.

But more than all this, Valmont Basile was the father of Vangie, who had as many suitors as there were unattached and eligible men about Bayou La Barre. In a region where white women were few, this was but natural. But Vangie Basile was sought not only because there was little competition. Men would have looked twice at Vangie anywhere—first with pleased surprize and second with desire.

Soft round cheeks had Vangie, where the dark-red roses of health bloomed on the clean tan of out-of-doors; full red lips, parted just enough to give a hint of the even white teeth; eyes of brown velvet, flecked with gold; smooth shining strands of glossy hair of the color of ripe maize; a figure which had attained all the beauty of ripe womanhood but showed no sign of stolid fleshiness; add to all this the voice of a laughing angel and a world of clean-limned grace, and you have Vangie Basile.

Oh, but old Valmont was proud of her! And he made big plans for her future, too. A wedding, yes—with the son of some old French family in New Orleans. Nothing less. Vangie was a lady, and, though the heavens fell, she should live like one.

But Vangie and Larry Lavigne had seen each other. First it was at Valmont's store, where Larry brought each week his pack of alligator hides and his baskets of soft-shell crabs. Later they met regularly at the little white church in the 'Cajan settlement far up the bayou. And old Valmont raged inwardly as he saw all his fine plans and dreams go tumbling and crumbling into nothingness. Not for such as the men of Bayou La Barre was Vangie.

They were of all colors, these men, and spoke all tongues. There were Malay and Lithuanian and Japanese shrimp fishers from the shrimp platforms far out beyond L'Isle Carriere; clannish folk, these, who lived in isolated villages, the smoke from which could be seen on clear days from the landing below Basile's store. There were the 'Cajans, from the truck-farms at the head of Bayou La Barre; they sent in great wagon-loads of lush okra, polished purple eggplants and slender plantains for the city markets.

There were Creoles, whose Spanish forefathers had sailed out of Barataria with Jean Lafitte to wrest wives from the French

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deportation ships bound for Louisiana Territory. There was a colony of Filipino fishermen, of whom no one knew much save that they were suspected of employing the forbidden gill-nets in their quest for the giant redfish. There was a renegade Mexican revolutionist, who had been detected as a Constitutionalist spy and who had barely escaped with his life into Guatemala, whence he had gradually drifted across the Gulf to Bayou La Barre, where life was easy.

But Larry Lavigne gave small thought to the possible displeasure of Valmont Basile as he trudged down the soft mud road. First he would make a good sale, for he had twelve alligator hides, dry and crackling, in the pack upon his back. That meant fourteen dollars at least, for the hides were all large. Then there were the three dozen soft-shell crabs—three dollars more. And finally there were twenty-two newly hatched baby alligators, whose nest he had been watching ever since he had come upon it two months before. Basile was always glad to buy these, because the New Orleans curio stores were clamoring for them, and the tourists from up North were eager to purchase. They would bring five dollars, anyway—say twenty dollars in all, for the week.

But, best of all, after the dickering and haggling incidental to the sale had been concluded, he would talk with Vangie. She was probably sitting on the shady gallery in front of her father's store right now—sitting at the lower end where she could command a view of the road. And from the next bend they could see each other, and she would step out from the gallery and wave a greeting to him.

But, when he rounded the next bend and looked down the straight brown path, there was no figure in a bright print dress to wave a greeting. Nor did he see Vangie as he crossed the gallery and entered the store—only old Valmont, who rose from his chair behind the long counter.

"HOWDY, Val," said Larry. "Got a good mess for you this time."

He set the two baskets down on the counter and slid out of the straps of his pack, sighing as the burden thudded to the floor. As he stooped to undo the fastenings of his pack, Valmont's voice arrested him.

"Wait a minute, Larry. You an' me are due to have a little talk afore we start a dicker today."

There was something about the timbre of Basile's voice which aroused a vague uneasiness in Larry. He leaned forward.

"Y'aint frettin' about nothin', are you, Val?" he asked.

"No—leastways not yet," replied Basile. "It's hard tellin', though, what might happen."

"All right. Get it offen your mind, whatever it is."

"I aim to. It's about Vangie."

"What about her?" asked Larry with sudden misgiving.

"Oh, she ain't sick or nothin' like that. It's about you and Vangie," corrected Basile. "You and her's been seen together a right smart, and folks was beginnin' to allow as how you two were keepin' comp'ny."

Larry laughed, and even in the semi-darkness of the store it could be seen that he had turned red.

"Well, Val," he said, "I don't reckon you could hardly call it that. I ain't never said a word to Vangie. Fact is, I wish we was keepin' company reg'lar."

"It's got to stop—that's all."

"Stop? You mean I ain't to see Vangie?"

"I do."

"But what for? Why?"

"Dunno's that's any concern of yourn. It's got to stop because I say so. I got other plans for Vangie. Ain't that enough?"

"Not for me, it ain't," replied Larry hotly. "What's Vangie say about this?"

"She don't know," returned Basile, "and, lessen you tell her, she won't find out. But, outside of that, Vangie minds me. What I say goes with her."

"An' I'm just to mind you, too? I'm supposed to go my ways an' say nothin'—not even pass the time of day with Vangie when I come here with my truck? Is that it? Well, what if I don't?"

Basile smiled grimly.

"Figger it thisaway," he suggested. "I reckon I could get along without no more 'gator hides if I just nach'ly had to. And they's a right smart o' folk bringing me sof'-shell crabs; so's I won't run short of them even if I never bought no more offen you. Mebbe you'd best mind what the old man says, Larry."

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"Say, listen, Val. You wouldn't do me that, would you? Why, where'd I sell my stuff if not to you?"

"Don't reckon you'd sell it at all."

"An' what if I bought me a little gasoline boat an' run my hides an' crabs down to Bayou Teche my own self?"

"I wouldn't do that if I was you. I got a contract for all the freight from Bayou La Barre with the packet comp'ny. They couldn't afford to lose my trade, and they'd lose it if they had dealin's with you."

"You ain't funnin' me, are you, Val?"

"Ever hear of me breakin' my word?"

"No, I don't reckon I have."

"Well, I'm giving you my word, right here an' now, that, if there's so much as a whisper about you an' Vangie keepin' comp'ny, I'll have no more dealin's with you, to buy or to sell—and you know what that means."

For a long, long minute, Larry stood silent and motionless, apparently absorbed in a study of the worn graining of the board counter. Then he spat on the floor.

"——," he said harshly. "Reckon I'll have to learn you a lesson, Val. You're gettin' too old an' uppish for your own good. Now me an' Vangie ain't never said no word to each other, an', if it's any satisfaction to you, I won't talk to her—" he paused significantly—"till you ask me to."

"I'm fearin' you'll get old a-waitin' for me to do such."

"That'll be somethin' for me to worry about. Don't get it into your head that I'm thinkin' of givin' up Vangie, if she'll have me. An' that's all about that. D'you want to buy this here stuff?"

" 'Twon't hurt a mite to take a look at it. Let's see the skins first."

When the bargain had been struck, old Valmont reached under the counter for a bottle.

"My treat, Larry," he said. "A trade's a trade, an' here's for lagnappe."

But Lavigne drew away.

"Put 'er back, Val," he said. "I don't drink only with my friends."

INTO the bottom of his pirogue Larry Lavigne placed a slender oak pole, about eight feet long, a double hook of rusty iron, shaped somewhat like an attenuated letter S, a small hatchet and a short length of quarter-inch manila rope. Under a tiny triangular canopy which made a shaded recess in the prow, he placed a pitcher of cold water.

Then, sliding the pirogue gently into the waters of the sound, he stepped in, seized the paddle and propelled the craft with long, even strokes along the coast. He kept some two hundred yards offshore, watching intently the dense tangle of cane-brake which formed a living green sea-wall for the prairie.

Sunrise was just pinking the eastern sky when he nosed his pirogue into the mouth of Bayou Noir, which seemed but a black crack twisting through the solid green of the brakes. On a tiny mud promontory he beached the pirogue, took his pole, hook, hatchet and rope and disappeared into the crackling cane stalks.

Skilfully and surely he pressed forward through the dense growth, instinctively avoiding the knife-edged leaves which would have cut into ribbons the face of one not used to the cane-brakes. Once he stopped in his tracks to let a big, sluggish moccasin crawl out of his path. He made no other pause till he came to the inner edge of the brakes, where the prairie fell away before him in a billowing expanse of tumbled wild-pea vines. These vines formed unstable heaps over the swamp tussocks and still more unstable bridges between them. A misstep meant several minutes' struggling to free oneself of the grip of the sticky black gumbo mud.

The Bayou Noir region was no new one to Larry Lavigne. Bearing away to the left, he soon came to the banks of what had once been a stream and was now but a break in the green prairie—a ribbon of black, gummy mud, with here and there a semiviscous pool of stagnant water. Along the banks of this stream he pressed steadily away from the direction of the sound. Here and there the tracks of small alligators could be seen crossing the mud of the stream bed, each trail a shallow linear depression where the tail had dragged through the mud, with the clearly defined imprints of the foot-pads on either side.

He made his first pause for study when he came across such a track which followed the stream bed instead of crossing it. The depth of the tail furrow and the size of the pad marks betrayed the trail of a seven-footer—a small beast as alligators go, and one he would not have stopped to follow ordinarily.

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Coursing carefully over the pea-vines at the side of the trail, he followed it for a quarter of a mile to a point where the tracks were joined by similar marks from the opposite direction. The joint trail led to a small pool of stagnant water, on the far side of which an opening under the overhanging vines of the bank disclosed the entrance to the alligator's "channel."

Larry glanced keenly about, and his practised vision caught a third trail between the bank and the pool—a trail which led to a roughly conical mound of muck-plastered sticks and leaves. Toward this he made his way. He stooped for an instant over the mud crater and scooped off the top. With a musical chinking as of porcelain against porcelain, a little heap of forty-odd eggs was revealed. Each egg was a two-inch cylinder of translucent, grainy white. Satisfied, Larry replaced the dry muck he had taken from the top of this incubator, laid his rope and hook on the mound, retained his pole and hatchet and advanced cautiously to a point on the bank directly overhanging the opening from the pool.

A few moments he waited; then he grunted—a peculiar mewing, croaking grunt, it was, which sounded like a half-grown kitten trying to imitate the resounding "*ka-chunk*" of a bullfrog basso. Short and sharp came the grunts at first, with the bullfrog motif predominating. But gradually a new note entered the call—an insistent, hoarse rasp, weirdly unmistakable in its timbre, whether heard in the song of a troubadour, the mating call of a nightingale or the grunt of a swamp alligator.

All but imperceptibly the muddy water in the pit seemed to stir—"began to shake" as Larry would have put it. Concentric semicircles spread radially away from the opening in the bank. On Larry's brow the heavy beads of sweat coalesced, coursing down his forehead in tiny rivulets which stung the corners of his eyes, but, aside from the odd pulsing in his throat which accompanied each grunt, he remained motionless.

A slim, muddy-black snout slid into view, the nostrils at each side of the tip raised inquiringly. Followed the long, lean jaws, only a few of the yellow teeth showing along the crenulate sides. Two bumps, in which were set the eyes, appeared. Softly Larry reached for the hatchet with his right hand, supporting his body rigidly with his left. But the hatchet lay just a fraction of an inch too far to the right. To reach it, it was necessary to move his body. The movement was ever so slight, but it was made.

There was no commotion in the mud-pit below. The head simply disappeared, jerked back out of sight as if it had been attached to a tightly stretched elastic.

On the instant Larry ceased to grunt, stood up, wiped his moist forehead on a moist shirt sleeve and sighed.

"Dog-gone the dog-gone luck!" he muttered resentfully. "I was aimin' to get you without no trouble. Well, if I have to dig you out, 'twon't be the first time, and I reckon 'twon't be the last."

He seized the slender pole and prodded down into the soft swamp muck. There was no yield to the sticky pressure; so he prodded again, now to this side, now to that; now forward and now back, until he had a complete surface map of the devious course of the channel. At the farther end the pole on the down thrust struck something hard and slipped gratingly off on a tangent.

"Sort o' touched you up that time, didn't I?" asked Larry of his prospective victim. "Well, I don't reckon you can go back much farther'n where you're at now, and I'll see to it you don't come for'ard none."

HE DROPPED the pole and took up the hatchet. Swiftly he chopped out a couple of sods from the rank swamp turf. Then he reached into the opening thus made and lifted out lump after lump of sticky black mud with his hands. For a matter of three feet or so he dredged directly down, and then the shaft he was linking pierced the roof of the channel.

Returning to the nest, he picked up rope and hook, lashing the rusty iron securely to one end of the pole. The free end of the rope he kept with the pole in his hand. Then he thrust the hook far down into the opening he had made in the ground. Finding no immediate response, he worked the pole about and was soon rewarded by the muffled sound of a snap, and the quivering rasp of the alligator's teeth as they grated on the rusty metal. On the instant he turned the pole about, to tear the hook through the soft and unprotected flesh of

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the lower jaw, but the alligator's teeth had slipped from the iron, and the jaws were locked again. Twice this performance was repeated, but the third time he sent the down-pointing free end of the hook through the skin near the acute angle formed by the sides of the lower jaw, and the great beast was fast.

Swiftly he unslipped the pole from the cunning knots which had fastened the hook to it, and, winding the now free rope about his hands, he set himself to pull. Steadily, inch by inch, through the constant pain of the straining hook on the lower jaw, he forced the alligator up and out of the channel.

The last few feet of this journey were accomplished with a rush, the alligator hurtling out and charging its tormentor open-mouthed. Larry stepped nimbly away, avoiding the side-fleck of the powerful, armored tail and keeping in front of the infuriated animal. Gradually, hand over hand, he shortened the length of rope between himself and the alligator until the leverage on the hook was great enough to permit him to release his right hand and reach for his hatchet.

A single blow sent the weapon through the skull, just back of the wicked eyes. There was one convulsive contortion, and the alligator lay limp and still on the trampled grass.

Ordinarily Larry would have dropped the carcass into the water of the little stagnant pool to protect the hide from the scorching rays of the sun and would have proceeded farther in search of game. Just now, however, he lay down on the grass for a brief moment of rest and then severed the head of the beast from the trunk with a few powerful, shrewdly directed blows of his hatchet.

From his pocket he drew a clasp-knife—a large, cumbersome affair with a sharp blade almost as long as that of a short sword. Slitting the alligator's skin along each side of the heavy back-plates, he ripped the soft hide from the belly and tossed the rest of the carcass far into the swamp. He picked up the head and regretfully fingered the velvet-soft pouches of skin under the lower jaw.

"It cert'nly looks like a shame to spoil a good hide, now don't it?" he murmured. "If Val only hadn't of been so dog-gone pig-headed! But no—he was just nach'ly goin' to run me offen the bayou."

At this point Larry began to laugh. He continued to laugh as he untied the rope from the hook. He threaded one end of the rope through the ragged tear in the alligator's lower jaw and sank the head into the water of the little stagnant pool.

Still laughing, he picked up the soft piece of hide he had saved, gathered his tools and made his way swiftly back to the little mud promontory where he had beached his pirogue. There he drank deeply from the pitcher of water and sat down for a few moments of rest before taking up the long pull back to his cabin.

"SEEMS to me like you ain't lookin' as pert as you might, Vangie," old Valmont Basile told his daughter with more than a hint of questioning in his voice.

Business was over for the day, and Valmont was smoking a good-night pipe in the gallery, where Vangie had settled down on the lowest step.

"Oh, I'm all right, daddy," Vangie assured her father listlessly.

"Not wantin' for nothin', honey?"

"No, daddy."

"Nor—nor nobody?"

There was a very definite pause this time before Vangie answered.

"No—nobody."

"That's good," said Valmont heartily. "I was 'most beginnin' to be afraid you'd set your mind on that worthless Larry Lavigne."

The girl's eyes flashed, and she drew herself up so that she sat very, very straight.

"Larry Lavigne, indeed! Why, daddy, how could you think of such a thing? I haven't even seen him but once in two weeks, and then we didn't speak. Does Larry Lavigne think I'd come running after him?"

"I'm mighty glad to hear you say that, honey. Fact is, I'd begun to figure you an' Larry was gettin' ready to keep comp'ny. But, if I'd known how you felt about him, I wouldn't 'a' said nothin' to Larry."

There was an odd tightness in the girl's voice when next she spoke.

"He—he—spoke to you—about me?" she asked.

"Not exackly. I spoke to him."

Valmont laughed a grim, satisfied little laugh in which the girl did not join.

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Instead, she made an effort to steel herself against a curious limpness which seemed to have seized her.

"You spoke to him? Daddy, won't you tell me what you said?"

"Well, honey, 'twas mostly in the way of business we talked. I kinder hinted around as folks was sayin' you an' him was keepin' comp'ny."

"Yes?" The girl tried hard to keep the eagerness out of her voice. "And what did he say to that?"

"Said he never spoke to you 'bout such things," grunted Valmont. "An' then I sorta let him know he'd best not. An' that was all they was to it."

The girl clapped her hands.

"You're just the dearest old dad a girl ever had," she cried delightedly. "I'll never, never be able to thank you—for telling me—all about it."

She jumped up, kissed her father, and before he could voice his astonishment, she had run into the house.

"Queer folks, women," ruminated the old man. "Now, I reckoned sure enough that she'd taken quite a shine to Lavigne. Just shows how they ain't no tellin'. She's tickled to death to hear I told Lavigne to keep away. It beats me."

Perhaps if old Valmont Basile had been able to peep into Vangie's room just then—if he might have seen her kneeling at the side of her bed and might have heard her sobbing ever so softly, with a little laugh of happiness in every sob . . . But Valmont did not come near her room. Instead, highly pleased with himself, he walked heavily back to the warehouse, where, as was his nightly custom, he carefully looked to each lock and fastening.

He had just turned from an inspection of the last window-catch when a flying body struck him from behind. A rigid arm passed around his neck, and its pressure on his throat shut off his breath before he could cry out. There was no struggle. Valmont fell heavily forward, his assailant following him down to earth. He was dimly conscious of the fact that he was being enveloped in ropes and that a cloth was being drawn tightly over his mouth and knotted at the back of his head.

Yet, when he came to, he was not gagged. His wrists and ankles were tied, but his arms were not pinioned to his body. It was still night, and he seemed to be dizzy, for he felt himself swaying in an odd, choppy sort of fashion—or else, yes, that was it—as consciousness returned more clearly he realized that he had been propped up comfortably in the prow of a pirogue. As he faced the stern, he could readily make out the figure of the lone paddler. A slight movement drew the latter's attention toward him.

"Feelin' better, Val?" asked the figure.

"You—Larry—what—where—what are you aimin' to do?"

"I'm follerin' a bad example."

"Oh, but you'll sweat for this. I'm tellin' you somethin' now—you're going to sweat for this."

"Don't reckon so, Val. Thought this thing out pretty careful."

"Where are you takin' me?"

"That's tellin'. Don't mind sayin' this much, though—we're headin' for the swamps."

"Bein' as how I know you right well, I don't reckon you're aimin' to leave me there."

"Hardly that. You'd die out there, an' then you couldn't change your mind about me speakin' to Vangie."

"You might cut these ropes for a starter, Larry."

"Not till we get to the swamps, Val."

"See here—what's all this mean? You said somethin' 'bout Vangie a while back. Are you tryin' to keep me in the swamps till I change my mind about you courtin' Vangie?"

"No. Reckon that wouldn't hardly be fair to you."

"Fair!" exclaimed Basile indignantly. He raised his bound wrists. "This your idea of fairness?"

Larry drew in his paddle and laid it, dripping, across the gunwales, allowing the pirogue to drift while he spoke.

"Y'see, Val, I aim to be square, which, thinkin' things over, is more'n you deserve. F'r instance, I couldn't take an' beat you up; you wouldn't have no more chance, once I was to start after you, than I'd have if you was to quit buyin' my stuff at your store. One way you had a cinch on me, an' the other way I had a cinch on you. Fightin' by business, I didn't have no show; fightin' with fists, you didn't have none."

"I don't see how things is changed any. If it'll help things along, I can tell you

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you might's well pack up your duds an' move, once I get back to the bayou. You'll never sell or buy a penny's worth down to my place."

"That's just it. Nobody can't settle nothin' as long as one side ain't got no show at all. An', lemme tell you, Val, things has got to be settled. I never knew till I quit talkin' to Vangie how far gone I was. It's a case of got to with me. I got to have Vangie."

"What sort of a show do I have, all tied up like this? This ain't your idea of a fair game, is it?"

"Not yet. You see, Val, whichever one of us had the upper hand could force a square deal. You, havin' the upper hand, elected to force a deal which didn't give me no chance. Now I've got the upper hand, and I'm going to force a deal where we both have the same chance."

"How? That's what I'd admire to know—how?"

"Take it easy. You'll find out quicker'n you reckon for."

He took up the paddle and sent the pirogue skimming over the water, and before long the light craft came to rest on a small mud promontory.

Larry rose from his seat stiffly and stretched himself.

"We're goin' into the swamp here, Val. How we go is your say. If you want to walk, all right. If you don't, I ain't above draggin' you. It's your say."

Valmont Basile wasted little time in considering the proposition.

"I'll walk," he decided swiftly, "though I'm gettin' mighty anxious to know when you're going to force this square deal on me."

Larry stooped and cast off the short rope which had loosely bound the old man's ankles. The rope he kept with him, threading it through his belt straps.

"I'd advise you to follow me clost," he admonished, "and tromp in my tracks as near's you can. While we're shovin' through the brakes, keep your head down, else them leaves'll slice the face clean offen you."

FROM the pirogue he took a small hatchet, the handle of which he thrust through his belt. Then he stepped gingerly across the narrow stretch of mud on which the pirogue was beached and plunged into the dense wall of cane stalks.

As closely as might be, Basile followed him. Three times the old man had to cry out to Larry to stop that he might rest, and once Larry had to turn back and with a good deal of exertion draw the old man out of a mud-pit into which he had sunk waist-deep. Daybreak was making itself felt rather than seen by the time they halted beside a conical mound of swamp muck.

"This is as far as we go, Val," Larry explained, "and they ain't no use for you to try to get away. You couldn't find your way ten rods without you got lost, lessen I was with you. An', as I said before, you ain't got no chance with me in a knock-down and drag-out fight."

"This ain't that square deal, is it?"

"Part of it—yes. That's how I'm makin' sure this is going to be a square deal. Now, Val, you 'n' me ain't been good friends lately, but they's one thing everybody'll say for you—your word's good. See this pile here?"

"Well?"

Larry scooped off the top and showed a collection of slim white eggs.

" 'Gator nest," he explained laconically. "Had my eye on it for quite a spell. The 'gator what belongs here lives right down yonder, an' she's a big one. Now I'm going to call her out. When she comes an' sees us by her nest, she'll start for one of us. See?"

Basile felt his hair rise, prickling along his scalp. A faint gray light had stolen over the prairie, and here and there the dawn wind, in downy little puffs, agitated the tumbled wild-pea vines. But to Basile each agitation betokened the presence of some moving monster.

"Say she starts for you, Val," continued Lavigne. "I got my hatchet here; if you holler, I'll have her deader'n a drowned rat inside of two shakes. But—if you do holler, that'll be givin' me your word that you take back what you said 'bout me not speakin' to Vangie.

"Wait a minute now, Val," continued Larry as Basile started to speak. "If she starts for me, I got my hatchet anyway, an', if I kill her without you hollerin', I'll agree to leave the bayou. An' that's how we're going to play fair. It all depends on which one of us that 'gator picks out."

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"Had your say?" quietly asked Basile.

"I have."

" 'Pears to me you're forgettin' one thing. S'posin' I don't elect to play your little game?"

"I wasn't funnin' when I said I could force a square deal."

One step carried Larry across the space between himself and Lavigne. Barely a few seconds later the cords about the old man's ankles were replaced and he was sitting propped up against the alligator nest.

"I'm going to sit down on the other side, here," said Larry quietly, "and call that 'gator out. O' course, you don't have to play. You don't have to give your word, because you don't have to holler. But, remember, if you do holler before I kill that 'gator, what you said about me not talkin' to Vangie is dropped. That's how you'll play the game—by hollerin'. An', if I kill the 'gator before you holler, I'll quit the bayou. Don't make no other remarks about this little game—what you say don't count. I'm runnin' this show."

Larry seated himself on the ground on the side of the nest opposite to the one against which Basile was propped. He was hidden from the old man's view completely, but that did not keep Basile from hearing Larry give the mewing grunt of the alligator call, softly at first and then steadily more loudly.

Louder and more insistent sounded the hoarse call from the other side of the mound. A stir in the vegetation near Basile sent his heart pounding into his throat, but the tangle of pea-vines was too dense—he could see nothing. His gaze returned to the lip of the mud-pit where the alligator was to rise.

Basile's breath was coming in sharp wheezes. His thoughts were no longer coherent, but through the chaos one idea burned its way clearly.

"Which way would the alligator turn? Which way would the alligator turn?"

He did not doubt that an alligator would appear. In truth, he would have cried out to Lavigne then and there had he been able to force his labored breath to serve his voice.

There was a commotion among the wild-pea vines at the lip of the mud-pit. The tip of a slim snout, black against the gray light, appeared above the edge. Higher and higher the head seemed to drag itself into view, the jaws spread wide apart and showing the gleaming, yellow-white fangs set sharply into the pink gums. For one awful moment the head seemed to stand still. Larry had stopped the call, and in the sudden hush there came to Basile a vision of what he might expect, bound as he was, should the alligator start toward him.

Just then the spreading jaws moved with a little rush toward the side of the nest where old Valmont lay helpless. In that instant he found his voice and shouted, and in the next moment Larry had leaped between him and those fear-compelling jaws and had brought down his hatchet, once, twice and again and had kicked something heavily back into the mud-pit. Basile saw no more of what followed.

How he got out of the swamp and back to the pirogue, he never knew. Not until Larry had drenched him with water from the bayou did he revive, and then he lay shaking in the bottom of the pirogue as Larry propelled it swiftly out into the open blue waters of the sound.

Larry took the old man to his cabin, where he gave him many cups of syrupy Creole drip-coffee, bitter and strong. It was after the third cup that Basile spoke.

"You win, Larry," he said shakily. After a moment's pause he added, "I'd like for to have you speak to Vangie, boy. You'll take good care of her, I reckon."

SOME months passed before Larry again visited Bayou Noir. The eggs in the nest by the side of the mud creek were due to hatch, and there was a ready market for the brood. Larry took twenty-four baby alligators from the mound and dropped them into the sack he had slung over his shoulders.

But, before returning to his pirogue, he searched until he found the dried, trunkless head of an alligator. The jaws were propped wide open with a stick, and through the angle of the lower jaw ran one end of a frayed and weather-worn rope which disappeared under the tangled pea-vines in the direction of the despoiled nest.

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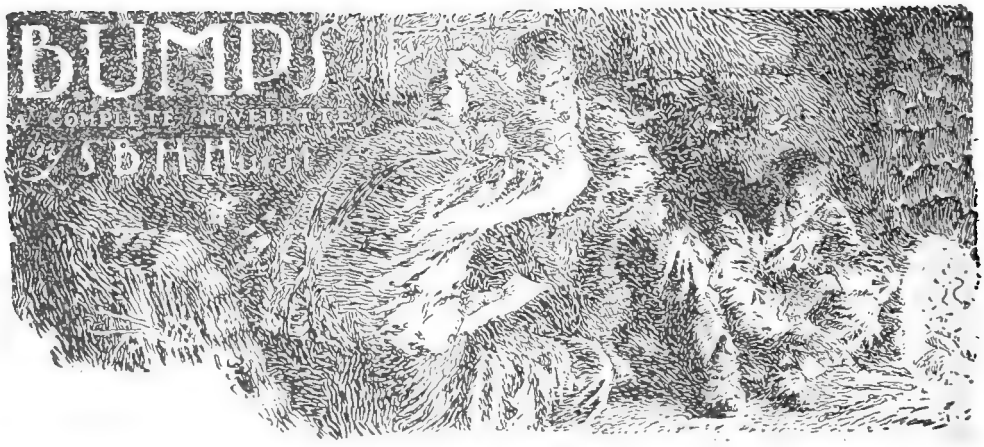

Author of "The Age-Old Puzzle," "Touching the Perils," etc.

THERE was a man, once, who spent twelve hours in Calcutta. Eight of those hours he passed in deep sleep, two of them in feeding, one in purchasing transportation elsewhere and the last in study of the town. Then he went his way and, feeling duly qualified to speak, spread the report that Calcutta was "a dismal place, a rotten place, a stinking place, no place for white people," and a lot of other things.

His opinion, being worthless, became even as the word of God to many, and they repeated his sayings. Others, dwelling in inland places and never sailing the seas, also heard the wise words of the great traveler and made them their own. Wherefore you will read widely about Calcutta being "a dismal place, a rotten place, a stinking place, no place for white people," and a number of other nasty things. But they are untruths.

For Calcutta is a city of romance, of mystery, a never-to-be-forgotten breath of the essence of the East. She grips a man so that in his age, when exiled from her, he experiments with strange chemicals, trying to recreate the odor of her, and, wrapped in that incense, he seeks the yesterdays, listening vainly for voices he will never hear again.

Yet he has his memories. Precious memories that come when least expected. Then he has but to close his eyes to behold the tired sun sinking after a hot day's work and to go wandering while the smell of the cooking-pots ascends to an appreciative heaven.

As a matter of fact, the sun had set. Not so very long, however, and its setting had done little or nothing in the way of cooling the atmosphere. So the passengers on the *Shah Jehan*, trooping into the not-too-large saloon for dinner, were telling one another that it was hotter on the river than it was ashore; that they were only then passing Garden Reach and no doubt would have to anchor or something.

Maybe they felt it more—this heat—because of the four days at sea just completed, where a northeast monsoon had made everything almost comfortable. So they strove, with the aid of copious whisky pegs, to sweat the heat out of their systems. While they were thus ingeniously employed, the mud pilot managed to dock the steamer at the Hastings Ghat.

The *Shah Jehan* was the only ship not entirely in Government employment that was permitted to visit the Andamans. Her work was to transport the convicts, the mail and various officials. There was once a man who wrote about the turtles brought by the ship from the Andamans, but—let us not be discontented again.

If the *Shah Jehan* was never known to carry turtles, she at least carried some other things quite as interesting. Take this particular passage, now. Among her passengers she had brought to Calcutta a quiet, unassuming young man, well-known, apparently, to the ship's officers, who had been for some weeks on the islands. Having once been an officer in that particular line himself, he was able to satisfy curiosity with a lurid account of the latest doings of one Headlam in Port Blair.

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He had traveled first-class—naturally, since the second was made up of Eurasians or Tommies—yet without a personal servant. But, unknown to his friends, he had carried a potent pass to the chief commissioner—a pass allowing him a greater freedom than the chief commissioner thought prudent but which, since it bore a heavier signature than his own, he had been compelled to honor without question, much as the quiet Mr. Sesson's goings and comings irritated him.

To call a convict settlement a beautiful place may seem incongruous, but to call the Andamans anything but beautiful would be untruthful. And, since there is much dubious information current concerning its inhabitants, it might be a good idea to mention that, while there are fourteen to fifteen thousand convicts on the islands—that is, there were that number in confinement at the time of Sesson's visit—only one of them is a white man—known locally as the *cady sahib* and the boss of the milk-boat.

After arriving at Port Blair, presenting his credentials and being put up at the officers' mess, Sesson loafed around until he could meet Mr. Convict without an audience. This chance presented itself early one morning, when the mist was making gossamer patterns over the various bays and inlets, at the end of the officers' wharf, where the white prisoner was leaving the morning milk.

He was a middle-aged man, this *cady sahib*, who had raised interest in his jailors as regards the anomaly of his color and a good deal of speculation regarding the reason of his being at the Andamans, because, strange to record, nothing had been given out officially about his crime, and he was the least likely person to break official silence. Even in the officers' mess occasional argument broke out concerning his incarceration, and bets were made among the drinks that even the chief commissioner himself did not know why the man was a prisoner—with no man sufficiently bold to ask that high official if such were the case.

But it was the case, and the polite Mr. Sesson knew it to be so. Therefore, he was as careful as might be to avoid showing any interest in the white convict and sought an interview with him when an audience would be least expected.

It is perhaps not necessary to mention that to gain a secret talk with a very conspicuous member of a convict settlement without the governor of that settlement being aware of it is not an easy matter.

Indeed, it might even be questioned whether an entire outward indifference, such as Sesson displayed, were the very best way of disguising an intention. And his time was short. An inquisitive Sikh guard was not quite out of loud-talking distance.

But, when the convict again returned to his unwelcome task of rowing the clumsy milk-boat to another island, Mr. Sesson had accomplished as much as would be possible in a century of similar attempt. And he knew it. There was a finality about the silent convict that made a mockery of the subtle weapons of argument.

So Sesson returned to Calcutta, leaving behind a wondering Port Blair and a worried chief commissioner. It was all very well for the officers' mess to take a vote and by such means answer the question aroused by Sesson's visit by the simple pronouncement of his being a —— fool down there to look for local color to put in a book. The officers had nothing at stake, and their ignorance concerning the white convict was bliss compared to that of the chief commissioner, who, in some intuitive fashion, connected Sesson's visit with the *cady sahib*.

Yet he had no reason to be worried. If the Indian Government chose to surround the fellow with mystery, it was their business, not the chief commissioner's. Of course, it was all very irregular and not overflattering. But sometimes men were rewarded for being good boys by being decorated with the C. S. I. But there was a look in the chap's eye—in the convict's eye, not Sesson's—that the chief commissioner did not like. But what could he do about it?

SESSON returned to Calcutta, leaving the *Shah Jehan* under a battery fire of good-natured ragging. He hired a simple *tikka gharri* and whispered a certain address to the *gharri wallah*. Then he sat back on the worn seat, swore at the temperature, lit a cheroot and tried not to think.

This was not because he was lazy but because a man whom he admired greatly

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had warned him against weaving an hypothesis without first being in possession of all the facts a diligent search could unearth. And Sesson lacked many facts—facts known to the mentor just referred to, who for the space of this record shall bear the exceedingly common title of the *Burra Sahib*.

But thoughts came—most of them in the form of questions. What, in the first place, did the *Burra Sahib* want of the white convict at the Andamans? Why was the man confined there? What was his name? Why was the chief commissioner kept in ignorance of his crime? It would seem that a better plan would have been to invent a crime to satisfy the chief commissioner. Why wasn't this done? Of the fifteen thousand other convicts, all who were not guilty and had been sent there by mistake were murderers. Was the white man a murderer? If he were, why had he been sent to the islands, instead of to. . . Or why wasn't he hanged? The man bore the earmarks of what the Englishman calls a gentleman. Looked very like a cashiered cavalry officer. Why cavalry officer, Sesson did not know, but he looked like that.

Suddenly Sesson sat as upright as the swaying *gharri* would permit. It had occurred to him that there might be others who wanted to know what that convict knew. But could any others get the pass that had been given him? No. Then they would try other means. A number of ingenious suggestions came to Sesson at that moment.

He sniffed appreciatively at the familiar smell of evening and wished he hadn't dined in the *Shah Jehan's* rather stuffy cabin, even if the Bummelo *matche* were darned good. He looked out at the well-known places the cab passed. It was good to be back again. Different cities get a hold on different men. London, Paris, New York—all have their devotees. But Sesson loved the loudly smelling then capital of India. Besides, he had had a number of interesting adventures there, of a sort no other place on earth could furnish, unless it were Benares—and he doubted that even. Delhi. . . No! Delhi was too old. It lacked the mixture. Curiously enough, the one city that approximated Calcutta in its appeal was San Francisco before the fire.

At the corner the *gharri* stopped. Sesson got out. Then he walked slowly through a twisting labyrinth of narrow, dark streets toward his destination.

As he reached a passage cut between two streets in the shape of a knight's move on a chess-board, he met, rather to his surprize, a friend and fellow employee of the *Burra Sahib*—an enormously stout babu, or native gentleman.

"Ha, he, sah, what luck? Tell me the luck was good, eh?"

"Well," Sesson grinned, "what do you want to know for—and how do you know why I have been away?"

"That is so simple." The babu's tone was wheedling. "I see you take a certain *ag* boat. Knowing where that *ag* boat go to, I can understand what you go to see. Then with a friend I make a little bet that you will be successful—my friend saying you will make a failure. So, *sahib*, having gambled much money on your courage and cunning and being a very poor man with a large wife and family, I am veree deesirous of knowing what luck, eh?"

"Well," replied Sesson, still grinning, "I must first tell the *Burra Sahib* about my journey. After that, if you ask him, no doubt he will settle the bet for you!"

The babu protested loudly against troubling the *Burra Sahib*, but Sesson greatly enjoyed being obdurate. He was fully aware that the babu—as faithful to his employer as he was himself—had merely invented the story of the bet to rouse his—Sesson's—sympathy so that the latter would satisfy his curiosity by telling all about his journey, regarding which he believed the babu to be in the densest ignorance. So he refused to answer a word, although the other nearly wept. Sesson was beginning to understand and appreciate the native character.

But the babu followed him to the door of the high-walled compound that surrounded the house, pleading, with slight variations of his tale, for information. The door was opened at Sesson's knock, and a tall, bearded Sikh appeared, who salaamed gravely and glanced disdainfully at the now silent babu.

"Ho, *sahib*," growled the Sikh, "I see that you have brought back one of the *budmash wallahs* with you. But I have heard that the men at Andaman are murderers. Where did you find that fat thief?"

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Sesson was heartily enjoying his homecoming. It was good to hear again the invariable battle of words indulged in by the babu and the Sikh when they met. Yet, although he could easily understand their knowing the destination of the *Shah Jehan*, so much talk about it struck him as unusual—with a significance that hinted at more than friendly curiosity. Yet the *Burra Sahib* trusted both the Sikh and babu as fully as he did Sesson himself. What did it mean?

"Did the fat man beg two rupees from you, *sahib?*" the Sikh was saying. "I hear that his wife has been buying presents for her latest lover and has written for more money!"

"Don't listen to him, Meester Seeson," suggested the babu, in no way offended by the Sikh's remark. "That whiskered goat never had a wife. He was to have married a woman of the street, but she dreamed she was being kissed by a billy-goat. Then she——"

But Sesson hurried past them. The language of the native of India takes no thought of the limitations of good taste, and he wanted no more of it. He tapped on the inner door, which was opened by the blandly smiling Chinaman, whose silence was a distinct relief. Yet, as that door closed behind him, he distinctly heard the babu telling the Sikh that he, Sesson, had been at the Andamans but had accomplished nothing. Which, the babu went on, was a —— good thing for somebody. Which remark mystified Sesson greatly.

Then, with his never-changing style and circumstance, the Chinaman ushered Sesson into the presence of his master, who, having latterly decided it to be unsafe to frequent the opium-smoking den he had so long patronized, was beginning his evening's bout of drug and logic on a canesleeve-chair, upon which he was sprawled at full length. His keen face was as pale as ever, and his scant white hair was covered with the black velvet skull-cap that was so flagrantly at variance with the custom of the white man in India. A new bearer, a boy of about sixteen, attended him—rolling the pill as the smoking required—and salaamed very low when Sesson looked at him.

Then, with a chill that mocked the heat of evening, there came over Sesson the terrible premonition that the *Burra Sahib* had lost not only his power but also the faith of those who served him. For, if ever he had seen a treacherous face, that new bearer, a stranger hired since he left Calcutta, certainly possessed one. And, knowing the many enemies surrounding the old gentleman whom he had come to love as a man loves a father, he trembled for his safety the while registering a mental vow to stay with him and protect him even if every other retainer were planning to play Brutus!

IN THE tired voice that was always indicative of the coming of the opium-induced silence, the *Burra Sahib* murmured the conventional greetings and paused, waiting for Sesson's report.

"No luck, sir. I saw the white convict and told him that Sinclair wanted to know where the cough came from and that he was willing to pay for the information. The fellow laughed in a cynical sort of manner and told me to tell Sinclair to go to ——. Then he seemed to change his mind, and he added that, if he were set free with a regular pardon in his hand, he would lead Sinclair to the place where the cough came from. But he would have to be free to lead—he would give out no directions.

"That was all, sir. The chap went down the steps of the wharf into his milk-boat, leaving me there. And—I hardly like to mention this—but two of our close friends seem to take a remarkable interest in my doings."

The *Burra Sahib* had listened with closed eyes to Sesson's report, and at its finish he did not open them. Indeed, he did not seem at all interested in the younger man's suggestion regarding the possible defection of the Sikh and babu. It was at least five minutes before he spoke. Then he merely said, "Thank you," wished Sesson good night and said he would see him at breakfast at eleven o'clock the next morning.

Sesson, having nothing else to do, sought his bed, feeling anxious. One of Sesson's most valuable traits, from the *Burra Sahib's* point of view, was his ability to obey without questioning or theorizing about his orders. Thus, he had gone to Port Blair, found the white convict and asked him, as he had been ordered, where the cough came from. That the question

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appeared to border upon the inane troubled Sesson not at all. He asked the question and brought back his report. But the curiosity of the Sikh and babu was something altogether different. It had nothing to do with orders and consequently troubled him greatly. All through the night he kept waking up to speculate upon the hinted infidelity of the two dusky adherents, and he continued to speculate while waiting for the *Burra Sahib* to come to breakfast.

But the elder man appeared to be in excellent spirits. His appetite was good, and he chatted of anything but the matters lying so heavily upon Sesson, until finally the young man managed to break into the *Burra Sahib's* unusual flow of talk and give vent to his fears concerning the trustworthiness of the two adherents.

"But I can not see that curiosity can be logically construed into treachery," smiled the *Burra Sahib.*

"Perhaps if you would enlighten me," replied Sesson, annoyed, "about this white convict, the cough he is supposed to know so much about and all the rest of it, I might be in a position to understand the babu and the Sikh. While your keeping me in ignorance may be a sort of test—I won't suggest that you don't trust me—I fail to see the advantage of it."

"No more do I," the other agreed cordially. "I'll admit that my failure to take you into my confidence was due to my laziness and the absence of your questions. You went to Port Blair without expressing the slightest curiosity, although the mission, or rather the words I told you to say to the convict, were unusual, to say the least. However, let me say to begin with that you needn't worry about the Sikh or the babu—nor yet about the villainous appearance of my new bearer, who cooks my pills so beautifully.

"That being said, there remains the convict. A wonderful man that, Sesson; a very remarkable man. Might have been almost anything he wished to be. It may be that the curious position he now occupies tickles his vanity to the point of enjoyment, although I should imagine that such a pleasure-loving individual would become excessively bored down at the Andamans. The only words spoken to him are orders, and all he can answer is 'yes, sir' or 'no, sir,' as the case may be. He no doubt has a few books, but his sole exercise is pulling that milk-boat.

"Funny creatures, men. Maybe he's blasé. You see, he's had more adventures than any man I ever heard about, and he knows more about this old earth of ours, and the people in it, than any one I ever met. That is why he's so dangerous—he knows too much."

"Was that what the babu meant?" interrupted Sesson.

"When?"

"When he said to the Sikh that I had failed and that it was a —— good job for some one I had?"

The *Burra Sahib* looked grave.

"Of course, neither one of those two would mention that affair to any one but one another," he said, "but I wish they didn't know about it. The convict at the Andamans told them about something he knows when they arrested him for me, hoping his knowledge would give him immunity. But they're both loyal—their words, that is. The babu's remark proves that, if any proof were required."

"But I'm all in the dark," protested Sesson.

"And I'm trying to get round to enlightening you. It's a tremendously mixed up affair. To begin with, to tell you all that convict knows and has done would take a lifetime. He's a wonder. An army officer, of excellent family, he seemed to have been born with such a cynical notion of life and of people that he had no room for the humanities. His sole idea appeared to be to extract what amusement he could from the mistakes of others. Then he traded upon his knowledge—a sort of gentlemanly blackmailer.

"But he also had a thirst for science. I believe he knows more bacteriology, for instance, than any man alive or any man who ever lived. Yet, if he knew he could save a life by giving what he knows to science, he would not do it. It would give him greater pleasure to think of a man dying because the doctor didn't know how to save him than it would to save the man by telling the doctor what to do. But to talk about that side of him, or, indeed, to talk about his character at all, is to broach an interminable subject. He's so many-sided, as it were. But there are excellent legal reasons for his being at the Andamans.

"He was sent there without a trial, and

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yet he made no complaint, because he knew that, if he were tried for any one of a dozen offenses, he would be sentenced for life. As it is, he knows there is a chance for his release. As for the Law's side of it—perhaps we should say the illegal action of authority—it seemed better to hold a possible trial over the man's head than to try him and have done with it. Because that would not have done with it. He would be sure to find a way of getting the proofs of his knowledge to the world. I mean the knowledge which caused the babu's remark about its being a good job.

"As long as there's a chance for his release, he won't give those proofs to the world. But let him be sure he's at the Andamans for life, and it would be all off. Such a scandal! It makes me tremble to think of it. You see, Sesson, he happened to be best man to a certain very illustrious personage when that person, then a younger son, married a lady who, while of an excellent family, was, shall we say, beneath him. Now that that illustrious person is— But you must have heard the tale?"

"I have," breathed Sesson, much impressed by the possibilities of the best man's disclosure.

"Well, let it go. Except for the Sikh and the babu, only you, I and one other know the fact I have just given to you. Our job now is to release that convict, yet so to bind him that he will never attempt to make a scandal."

"Release him?" asked Sesson incredulously.

"I see nothing else for it." The *Burra Sahib* drained his inevitable breakfast peg. "You haven't forgotten the curious message you took to Port Blair, have you?"

"Oh," ejaculated Sesson.

"Exactly. You see, in the course of his studies that white convict discovered the source of tuberculosis!"

Sesson gasped.

"YES," the elder man spoke slowly, "it had long been obvious to me that, while consumption is spread by those having it, there must be a place in the world where it had its origin. Of course, the disease is as old as humanity, and, for that reason, if there were not a well—a continuous source of supply for the germs—humanity would long ago have become immune. Somewhere there is a place where there is practically nothing else but the bacilli of tuberculosis. Imagine the festering place. A shallow lake or swamp, with trillions upon trillions of the tiny death-bringers. And every breeze that blows over the awful place carries trillions of the bacilli and scatters them upon the earth for men to breathe into their lungs and die.

"God! What a place that must be, and what a deed it would be to blot it out of existence! Even if one lost one's life doing it. Why, it is worth a hundred thousand men's lives to win the war against the white plague! And it will be done, Sesson. You and I—if you are willing—will obliterate the source of tuberculosis. Don't think I am talking foolishly, because I am not. Because that white convict at the Andamans knows where the place is—knows where the cough comes from. And we are going to Port Blair to get him to tell us. You see, it is just his nature to delight in the knowledge he possesses—happy in the fact that, while he could stamp out tuberculosis, he does not do it!"

"But, but—what about that other matter?" asked Sesson.

"Oh, some way will be found to silence him. Let me think it out. In the meanwhile, will you please go and engage a passage for both of us on the *Shah Jehan's* next sailing—find out the date. And don't worry about the fidelity of our two dusky friends. They were so upset about what that white blackguard told them that they believed I sent you to kill him. In some way they found out you did not kill him—at least, that is my surmise—and were upset by it. Both of them have begged me to send them down to the Andamans—on a 'hunting-trip,' as they explained it. It was a near thing for Menzies—the convict's real name—that the Sikh did not slit his throat. Only fear of annoying me kept the sword from doing its messy work. I must apologize—the Sikh is a clean swordsman. Now, run along like a good fellow and—get outside cabins, if you have to buy the ship!"

Feeling somewhat hazy—for Sesson's mental digestion was not of the highest order, and the bewildering hints and facts given him concerning the white convict by the *Burra Sahib* would have taken a strong mind some little time to assimilate properly

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—Sesson drove down to the office of the steamship company, engaged satisfactory berths and returned to see about repacking his recently emptied kit-bag.

Again the babu accosted him with cryptic conjecture, asking questions which betrayed a full knowledge of the pending trip across the Bay of Bengal. Sesson was almost certain that the *Burra Sahib* had taken no one but himself into his confidence. There could be no doubt but that such faithful servants were a protection, but they were also an embarrassment. For they apparently saw and heard everything that occurred—believing it their duty, as protectors, to know all that went on.

But, as Sesson very naturally thought, suppose a chap had a love-affair? He shivered as he thought of the conversation between the Sikh and babu if such a tender thing happened to him. It was all right for the *Burra Sahib* to have such men around him. The *Burra Sahib* was about seventy. But Sesson was young enough to be afraid to admit his youthfulness. Which was a very unladylike attitude.

The passage to Port Blair was like many such—four and a half days across a sea that looked as if it had never known a ripple, with the breeze made upon the ship's deck by her own movement tempering the heat into comfort, with huge meals and many games of chess and the last delightful smoke before turning in—when one by one the tellers of yarns nodded themselves into silence, with the bored stars, shining so close to the water, thankful for it. Then, through the night, the ship's bells, telling the time, with the repetition from the forecastle head and the drowsy call of the man on the lookout—"*Um decta hi*," or words to that effect, depending upon the length of time that had elapsed since he was a *jungli wallah*.

And the wonderful morning, with the salt shower from the deck hose, with the *colashe* sailors looking on at the familiar scene which they could never quite understand. For why would a man bathe in salt water when he could get fresh?

Yes, it was a very charming way of spending the time, that trip to Port Blair at that season of the year. But that same smiling Bay of Bengal could alter even as fearfully as a woman's face turning from the expression of love to that of hate. For, when the cyclone did its tarantella dance across toward the Hugli, then you might disbelieve a man who told you the bay was sometimes smooth. But, as some man said a long time ago, "You can not blame the bay—it's the wind, blast it!"

Then Port Blair, with the excitement caused by the arrival of the mail. Into that lovely harbor the steamer rounded, bringing within vision the unhappy convict barracks, the large lighters coming off for cargo and—more convicts to work them. Convicts, convicts everywhere. Convicts in every stage of freedom, from double leg-irons to no irons at all, even to a freedom limited only by the sea itself—to a patch of land for self-cultivation and a female convict for a wife.

But that last is the supreme degree, attained by the few. A way of freedom by which many pass is the great gibbet, whereon four men may be hanged at one pull of the drop—as they often are when the Indian Penal Code is broken by those who may not break it again and live.

A beautiful scene, Port Blair Harbor in the early morning. Natives—curious, tiny negroid gentlemen, clothed in nature and a large clay pipe—fishing for baby shark from prehistoric canoes. And a more delicious breakfast than a fried baby shark can not be had on earth, unless it be the too-rare and delicate as seafoam Bummelo caught at the mouth of the Hugli.

They went on shore in one of the ship's boats, did the *Burra Sahib* and Sesson, traveling in this case with one servant—the ugly bearer who had aroused the suspicions of Sesson—who bore quite a resemblance to the majority of Port Blair's inhabitants. This last Sesson remarked at once, and he decided to keep an eye on the servant in spite of the *Burra Sahib's* confidence.

They put up, as Sesson had before, at the officers' mess, and the *Burra Sahib* at once went to interview the chief commissioner.

A VERY different sort of official from the man he succeeded, this chief commissioner owed his position to a great deal of influence and an entire lack of ability. The answer is that he was such an arrant fool that his relatives wanted to be rid of him, and the Andaman Islands seemed to them to be the farthest place they could have him removed to—that is, this side of the hereafter.

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So he strutted, his position keeping him sacred and free from the impertinence with which the military officers of the Andaman guard desired to paint him. Now and then some one pulled a string at the capital and the chief commissioner responded by moving accordingly. But he had no initiative and was wisely allowed no chance to try to prove whether he had or not. Hence his ignorance regarding the white convict—for a strong man would have resigned before submitting to such a disguised insult and obvious lack of trust.

He received Sinclair, the *Burra Sahib*, with a studied insolence—propping a monocle into an eye that was never intended to wear an eyeglass and staring at his visitor as if he were a life-insurance agent or some one else not accustomed to being welcomed. At all of which the *Burra Sahib* smiled politely. Then he handed the chief commissioner a letter, which the other received with an amusing mixture of languidness and haughtiness.

"Ah, oh, yes. Well, me good man, and what can I do for you? Don't you think you might have given this *chit* to, er, a sergeant, eh? Suppose you want to take a look around, eh? Well, you hardly expect me to bother, do you?"

"If," suggested the *Burra Sahib* silkily, "you will trouble to study the seal on the back of the envelope with a great deal of care, it might percolate into your official woodenness that it would be a good notion to try to be civil."

The chief commissioner almost shouted for the guard. But the visitor wore no uniform and could, therefore, not be hurt by complaint. There was no colonel, itching for promotion, who could be used duly to chasten this impertinent fellow. And, in the meanwhile, the rays of light converging through the pebble of the monocle conveyed to the chief commissioner an impression which made him start, not to say jump.

Hastily, with an entire absence of dignity, he tore open the envelope. There was no mistake. The seal had not betrayed him. All the absurd superciliousness fell away, leaving him a very good boy indeed. He was willing—nay, anxious—to do anything Sinclair desired—even to the half of his kingdom, as it were. For the signature attached to the letter was none other than that of the viceroy himself. Sinclair, always good-natured, felt sorry for the man. He looked like a punctured toy balloon. There was no insolence left in him. He stared at his visitor in alarm, wondering who the devil he was.

Sinclair, known to millions as the *Burra Sahib*, was the uncrowned monarch of India, as well as its self-appointed guardian. Going out to India as a very young man, he had met with a strange adventure which caused him to leave the secret service. After making some money he began to spend his life solving the problems ever troubling the authorities, with such good results that he was the means of breaking up a far greater and much better-organized conspiracy than that which resulted in the Mutiny—of discovering the long-sought Underground Calcutta and the gold hoarded by the conspirators and gleaned from the entire native population.

But his name never appeared in the official reports. It—that is, all the credit—went to one Sir Richard Musgrave, who was afterward rewarded by being made Lord Musgrave and, eventually, viceroy. And Musgrave was not one lacking in gratitude. He promised Sinclair, who asked no reward, that anything within his power to do he would do if asked. Until the matter of the white convict at the Andamans, Sinclair had asked nothing. Then he had asked a big thing—nothing else but the authority to release the convict if he thought it well to do so.

In short, the chief commissioner read in the letter that Sinclair was to be allowed to do exactly as he wished while at the Andamans and that he was also to be in no wise molested if he should choose to pardon and take away with him one Menzies, the *cady sahib*, or any other convict.

Naturally, after making sure the letter was not a forgery, the chief commissioner was Sinclair's very willing servant. But he felt slightly uneasy. How uneasy he would have felt if he had known as much about the convict as even Sesson did and so realized the enormous amount of faith the viceroy reposed in the pale old gentleman is a matter of amusing speculation.

So it was arranged that that evening—Sinclair not wishing to attract too much attention—the *Burra Sahib* should have the use of the chief commissioner's own steam launch, that he be given the pass-

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word and that the launch should be manned only by his secretary, Sesson, who believed he knew how to run it, and by his bearer, the evil-looking youth, who was to be made to understand how to shovel coal and so stoke it.

THEN Sinclair left the official bungalow, paused and swore gently. Once again in his eagerness for adventure, he had forgotten that the craving for opium would assail him in the midst of it and that, therefore, he had let himself in for considerable suffering and consequent lowering of his powers, both mental and physical. This last so troubled him that he almost decided to change the time set for boarding the steam launch, but his desire for secrecy held.

Yet he was bothered, because he knew that he was going to do battle with a clever fighter, one also without scruples or consideration. Whatever Sinclair promised the convict, would be promised in the name of the viceroy and could not be changed. But the *Burra Sahib*, so long a winner, so long successful, looked upon as the wisest man in all India, was obstinate. Not without egoism, like all great men, he felt able to handle the convict, even if the craving for his drug laid him almost prostrate.

And, after all, it wasn't such a complicated task. It only meant a promise or so on both sides. Wherefore the *Burra Sahib* returned to Sesson and tiffin. And Sesson, being young and lacking in observation, as well as slightly careless in remembering, never thought of his master's nightly smoke when he heard the news about the coming evening. But the ugly bearer, than whom a more faithful being never breathed, looked anxiously at his employer. But for him to make a suggestion would have been sacrilege—or so he thought. Also, nothing could induce Sinclair to change his hour for smoking, and to smoke prior to starting on the expedition meant he would be, of course, helpless.

The night saw an excellent dinner in the officers' mess, with one Captain Head in good form. By the way, this Head, although having little to do with this chronicle, should be introduced for his own sake. He had figured elsewhere, but that was before the Boxer business, when he lost his left arm, after which he was promoted to command of the guard-boat at the Andamans and remained there, to the vast delight of his friends so stationed.

It was said of him that he occasionally woke, after a long sleep, almost sober, but that, as he did not feel himself when in that condition, he changed it as soon as his servant could bring the necessary ingredients.

This evening, when the *Burra Sahib* caught Sesson's eye and began to make his adieus, Head insisted on accompanying him, much to Sinclair's embarrassment. But he knew his man, and, alone in the anteroom, he whispered that he had an appointment with a lady.

Whereupon, Head made profuse apologies, begged the *Burra Sahib* to call on him should he get into trouble—"As you are sure to, old chap"—and, apparently quite oblivious to Sinclair's age, returned to the mess-room to enliven the company with lurid accounts of his own many love adventures—interrupting himself to send a servant after the *Burra Sahib* to tell him that he, Head, would be sure to meet him when he came back.

SO, HAVING shaken off unwelcome friendship, the three embarked. But, while Sesson was no doubt an excellent sailor, he was a mighty poor engineer. The bearer was also very much of an amateur as a stoker. His one idea was to shovel coal and to continue to shovel coal, without regard to the head of steam his energies produced.

What with Sesson's varied attempts to start the engines, the ton or so of coal under the boilers, the *Burra Sahib's* erratic steering and his lack of knowledge concerning the navigation of the harbor, their expedition very soon began to assume unnecessary perils, of which they appeared to be entirely unaware.

But they were observed—which, of course, was the last thing Sinclair desired. Indeed, quite a crowd gathered to speculate upon the apparent intoxication of the chief commissioner. It was his launch—this the lookers-on knew—but what on earth—or water—was he doing with her at that time of night? Several ladies said it was disgraceful and chided their husbands about their loudly expressed enjoyment of the scene. And it was an interesting sight.

Sesson, after a quarter of an hour's

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experimenting with the various levers, had managed to get the engines going properly. In the meanwhile, the bearer had raised so much steam and was still so valiantly shoveling coal that the funnel belched a perfect fireworks of flames and ashes. Sesson, observing this and being rather in the dark concerning the safety-valve, had tied down the whistle-string to let off steam. Consequently, an unearthly shriek wailed all over the harbor and was echoed and reechoed from island to island, with the *Burra Sahib's* shouted orders—he dared not leave the wheel—drowned in the general discord.

And the *Burra Sahib* was doing his share toward promoting the general merriment. He knew which way to turn the wheel, but he had apparently forgotten that it is necessary to "meet her" when the launch neared the desired course. So, shrieking and flaming, the launch of the chief commissioner described wild courses about the waters, making little progress in the desired direction of Hope Island, where the white convict had his lonely hut.

What the chief commissioner thought of the man the viceroy so completely trusted has not been recorded, but what Head thought has been. This latter gentleman, addressing an appreciative audience, remarked that it all reminded him of his own gay youth.

"Been on love-affairs myself," he explained, "and had to run and dodge like that. But I can not see the husband's boat—can you?"

But men will learn, if they do not lose their lives learning. After a long period of dangerous gyration Sesson managed to tell Sinclair how to steer within about forty-five degrees, the while he discovered how to stop the boat and start her again. He also beat into the head of the bearer the fact of there being sufficient coal under the boiler. Then he cut the whistle-string, and peace came over the harbor of Port Blair—rather to the disappointment of the spectators, who had expected at least an explosion with little pieces of the much disliked chief commissioner raining down from a disgusted heaven.

But they were in some wise satisfied—the ladies were—when Head loudly explained about the love-affair, which his condition had caused him to transfer from the *Burra Sahib* to the owner of the launch.

The fiery funnel died to its normal hue, and, without lights to announce its coming, the launch went forward on its erratic course. There came an epoch when Sesson succeeded in more or less mastering the intricacies of the engines and the peculiarities of the stoker. A brooding peace, if not exactly settling, was at any rate twittering her torn wings over the proceedings. Into this calm the anguished voice of the unnautical *Burra Sahib* broke deliriously—his words cut off in mid-speech by a dislocating bump, and his further language drowned by a chorus in Hindustani, as the launch came smartly into contact with the patrol-boat, manned by an indignant dozen Sikh guards.

But the indignant voices—roused almost to the point of assassination—died suddenly when the coxswain discovered the identity of the launch. He shouted something about "*Burra Sahib*," and the miraculously undamaged patrol-boat pulled away into the darkness.

"They appear to know me," murmured Sinclair dazedly when Sesson gently but firmly took charge of the wheel.

"Yes," responded the young man, "and you have added to the reputation of the *Burra Sahib*, all right. Wonder what he'll tell Musgrave."

But all things find an ending, and, since the gods did not apparently wish to sink the launch, it arrived in the course of time at the old, broken-down and neglected wharf of Hope Island, where, about a hundred yards from the water, the white convict lived in his lonely shack. Upon the creaking, shadowy place—where the ghost of the ill-fated Lord Mayo is supposed to haunt forever, attended by the ghost of the convict who stabbed him—Sinclair and Sesson walked warily, not at all sure that the ancient timbers would not break and let them into the mud.

Leaving the ill-looking bearer in charge of the launch, they made their stumbling way toward the hut—with only a vague idea as to its actual direction. But the lonely convict had heard them. Altogether unusual was any visitor to Hope Island, especially after dark, but Menzies—kept fully informed by a subsidized guard—knew that Sinclair had arrived at the Andamans. He, also, knew Sinclair—his character and his habit—and he was prepared for the visit. So he walked softly

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out of his hut, waited a few moments and then laughed loudly. Since he happened to be within five yards of his visitors when he laughed, they naturally jumped, startled.

"Don't be scared," said Menzies sarcastically, "it's only little me. And why I am so honored is beyond my small ability to calculate."

"That's not true," retorted Sinclair, now that he had reached shore, his own self again. "If you recognize me, you must have more than a notion why I am here. Suppose you be hospitable and show us to your house. Have you a light of some sort? It's hard to keep from falling over something here."

The convict struck a match and lit a lantern.

"Follow me," he said shortly.

They followed, the light guiding them indifferently and failing altogether to show them a smooth path over the rutted and rock-strewn ground. But they reached the hut without any serious fall, where the convict waited in the doorway. Then he turned without speaking, and, entering, they found him crouching over a small stone fireplace, where some small logs were burning smokily. The hut was filled with the myriad insect life of the islands, and the temperature was almost unbearable. The visitors, coughing and wiping their eyes, found seats on broken cane chairs. The convict had extinguished the lantern, and the little light given out by the fire only served to throw into relief his hard, sardonic features.

"WONDER at the fire?" asked the convict, apparently amused at the activity of his visitors, who were busily engaged beating off flying creatures of varying degrees of nastiness.

"No, not at all," snapped the *Burra Sahib*.

The convict laughed.

"I can guess what you nearly said," he spoke politely. "You were about to say that my kind needs an eternal fire, whatever the temperature—both now and hereafter. Eh?"

"Look here, Menzies." Sinclair spoke like a man with no time or intention for fooling. "I did not come here for any sort of theatricalism, but to make you a proposition. I offer you your freedom in India, in the name of the viceroy of India, if you will lead me to the source of tuberculosis and give me what I consider a sufficient guarantee that you will never show to any one the proofs you hold concerning the fact of a certain marriage having taken place.

"What have you to say? I don't intend to waste time with you. There is nothing in it for me, except the satisfaction which any decent man would feel at relieving the world of a horrible scourge. So keen am I to do that that I asked a favor—the first in my life. Of course, you can not understand my motive in this; so I won't try to make you. Now, don't waste time. You have all to gain. I have nothing. Do you want to be free, or shall I return to my boat?"

It was really a weird scene. Almost more elusively uncanny than a Doré nightmare. That old hut, with its sinister history, on that lonely island, surrounded by other islands which were populated by practically none but condemned murderers. The darkness, made more so, as it was made horrible, by the millions of insects the fire attracted; the stillness, except for the insects and the voices when the men spoke, and, perhaps above all, the strange conflict of desires that had drawn the men together.

And, visible in profile against the firelight, the man, Menzies, whom the *Burra Sahib* recognized as the world's greatest adventurer and one of its most original scientific thinkers. One could understand that such a mind found nothing of loneliness in its isolation—there was so much to think about.

He appeared to be thinking now, while Sinclair waited for an answer. Suddenly he asked a question.

"Just what would you consider sufficient guarantee?"

"I don't intend to coach you," snapped Sinclair. "You must submit your guarantees—and I will decide upon their sufficiency."

Again the convict thought, his brows knitted, and the other waited with all the patience possible, realizing that the formulation of the guarantee demanded was no easy task for a man in the convict's position. But the convict was not thinking of guarantees. His cunning brain was simply maneuvering for position. He knew that

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Sinclair would soon begin to crave his nightly smoke, and, when the craving gained headway, one of the few men in the world whom he recognized as his intellectual equal would be at a distinct disadvantage, to say the least.

But he would have to play Sinclair. To hold him with his natural disinclination to visit the hut again—that would be the line holding him against the pull of his desire for opium. But the fishing would have to be cleverly done. But who could do it better than the man crouching in such utter discomfort over the fire—the man with such a dominating will that his visitors actually believed he enjoyed the fire. They never guessed that he was bearing the heat stoically in order to annoy them with the insects it attracted—the insects the flame and smoke kept out of his own face.

Cunningly Menzies watched. Yes, Sinclair was getting restless. Time to play him a bit.

"It's rather difficult," murmured the convict, "to put a satisfactory guarantee into words. I can, of course, assure you that I have not mentioned the marriage except to your two servants in Calcutta. You know I was in Malta when it was said to have taken place. Can you give me an idea of just what you want?"

"You, of course, have told no one else?" Sinclair asked.

"No. Why should I? It would weaken my hand, would it not? Nothing to gain by blabbing. The strength of my knowledge lies in my keeping it to myself until you are willing to trade. If I talked about it, you would lose hope of keeping it quiet, and what I can prove would be of no value to myself. Isn't that so?"

"By George," Sinclair stammered curiously. Then he went on rapidly, as the convict laughed, "I believe you're telling the truth."

"I am. Now, what guarantee do you wish?"

For an hour or more the conversation continued. The fencing was brilliant on both sides, and Sesson enjoyed listening in spite of the insects and heat. But gradually Sinclair weakened, his drug-need beginning to make itself felt and the atmosphere of the hut taking heavy toll of his age, as the convict knew it would.

But Sinclair had not risen to where he could demand favors from a viceroy without having also a powerful will, and he would not admit his growing weakness. There came a time when he doubted his ability to walk as far as the launch, so palsied were his limbs; yet he concealed the fact from the faithful Sesson, if not from the convict. In the launch the evil-looking bearer waited apprehensively, knowing much about opium.

"I'll give you my word," said Sinclair at last, struggling for complete command of himself, "and Sesson here is witness, that, if you can satisfy me—after you have taken me to the source of tuberculosis—that there is nothing in it for you to talk about the marriage after you have destroyed all proofs you possess in my presence, I will be satisfied."

It was a weak agreement for such a man, and the convict smiled at the fire. Then he asked an extraordinary question—

"Do you mind if I feel your bumps?"

"Eh?" the *Burra Sahib* was astounded.

"It's this way. Since the days of Galt and Spersheim the science of phrenology has fallen into disrepute. In fact, the practise of it is now generally confined to such charlatans as practise palmistry and the somewhat allied line of astrology. But upon the old discoveries I have grafted much new matter, and, since I never knew a man who interested me more than you do, I should be greatly obliged to you if you will allow me to examine your head."

Sinclair stared, as well he might, never dreaming that the convict was simply trying to add to his ultimate torture by delaying his departure until the need for opium became agonizing. Indeed, Sinclair did not know that the convict knew of his secret habit. But he had no intention of allowing his head to be pawed, and he said so.

"All right," answered the convict with well-assumed indifference; "I don't mind. All the same, I think you ought to let me find out if your bumps show if you can be trusted—how do I know if, after I show you where the bacillus breeds, you will not have me rearrested?"

"I will have endorsed on your pardon that you can not be arrested for anything done in India prior to the moment—time and date given—when I put it into your hand," snapped Sinclair.

"Still, I don't feel quite satisfied." The

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convict was watching the uneasy twitchings of Sinclair like a cat. "Why should I?"

"Will you promise to show me where the bacillus breeds?" The eyes of the *Burra Sahib* were full of tears not caused by the smoke, and he was in agony to get away.

"Yes."

"Then I'll take your word for that. And will you promise never to breathe a word about that wedding and give me some tangible assurance that you will keep your word?"

"I will." The convict's voice was as steady as if nothing of moment had taken place.

"Then, in the name of the viceroy of India, you are free. And here is your pardon!"

And Sinclair gave the convict the valuable document.

"Thank you."

Menzies, living up to his reputation, never betrayed his joy of victory. Sinclair was committed, when, not craving opium, he would have never given such a promise without a tangible assurance. But his keen desire to aid humanity by destroying the source of the white plague—of which he firmly believed the convict knew the whereabouts—had overcome any scruples he might have had against allowing such a man as Menzies to be free, and his haste for the drug had made him a fool in the other's hands—he never asked for a proof of the other's alleged knowledge, whereas in his normal mind he would have demanded ample proof.

BUT his mistake became apparent to him as soon as he got to bed and, soothed with opium, logically reviewed the proceedings of the evening. Then the *Burra Sahib*—the man who had saved India for the British, the one Englishman who really understood the native mind, a greater man than Clive or any other of the big historical figures—looked at the bearer, who was so deftly administering to his needs, and in the bitterness of humility realized that the poor native would not have acted so foolishly. And in that realization, further nurtured by the happenings of the next few weeks, may be traced the beginnings of Sinclair's breaking of the shackles of his habit.

He had had a terrible time after handing the pardon so theatrically to Menzies. Unable to walk without help, the tears streaming down his cheeks, his lips whimpering for haste, he had been anything but the man his reputation limned him. A pitiful exhibition he had made of himself, with the convict offering advice with simulated sympathy and asking Sesson questions concerning the nature of the illness which had so suddenly overtaken "our poor friend."

Then came the erratic voyage back to the wharf at Port Blair and his being carried to bed. Even the delight of smoking himself back to peace had not atoned for the sufferings of his waiting, and, as peace came, it brought the mockery of his mistake.

He tried to find comfort in the hope of Menzies keeping his promise about the wedding, but that comfort was small. Of course, the convict would have to keep his bargain and show where the bacillus had its breeding-place. But where was the certain assurance that he would not make a scandal or continue to hold over Sinclair the threat of doing so? His word! That word was worth nothing. Why, Sinclair thought, I actually went to the fellow with the intention of making a deal with him for his pardon and gave him the pardon without making the deal—while all the time he cleverly made me believe I was making the deal I came to make!

And the convict had the pardon—was a free man. When the *Shah Jehan* again sailed for Calcutta, Menzies sailed with her as a first-class passenger, with Sinclair at the mercy of his politely disguised gibes. Verily, this record of the one mistake of the *Burra Sahib* makes his many great successes seem like accidents! Far better for him, it appeared, had he been less humane and never dreamed of stamping out the white plague.

And Menzies, his story known, was an object of curiosity to the other passengers. But he enjoyed this notoriety. The many-sidedness of his character cropped out in strange ways. For instance, one afternoon in the smoking-room he was joking the *Burra Sahib* about his bump of benevolence, telling him—what the angry Sinclair knew only too well—that one can come a cropper over one's own virtues, when an assistant clerk, employed on the ship to tally cargo, edged his way into the conversation.

The clerk was past forty and was doing work usually done by a boy of eighteen.

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This describes him. But he had read certain books and heard certain mouths talk. Now he began declaiming to Menzies about the "criminal capitalists who will not pay a man a decent wage," believing that a convict would surely be in favor of the social revolution. He was disappointed, and Menzies' words are worth repeating:

"I have met lots of fellows like you, and they were all failures. That is why you talk as you do. Your creed is the creed of the quitter. You lack both the courage and the energy to break away and start for yourself. Consequently you are always working for wages. Without those wages you would starve, to the benefit of the world. You are a failure because, finding conditions too hard for you, you want them changed, instead of being man enough to overcome the conditions standing between you and success. Suppose your social revolution arrived. You would expect to be then as well off as any man, wouldn't you?"

"Of course. And that is as it should be," answered the angry clerk.

"Very well," replied the ex-convict. "Now let us assume that the social revolution is a success. We'll suppose it is so. Now, if you are man enough to tell me you are my equal, I'll kick you through the door and then thrash you. Go ahead!"

The smoking-room roared, and the clerk slunk away. Asked if he would have kicked the clerk, Menzies said:

"No. I would have shaken hands with him. But I knew he wouldn't say he was my equal—too much of a coward. That's why he's what he is."

And he turned to annoy Sinclair again.

Then came Calcutta, with the *Burra Sahib* at the limit of his patience and Menzies sensing it. It might not be safe to trust Sinclair's good nature any further, and besides—another side of the strange man came uppermost—he wanted Sinclair's approval. So he asked for a private talk.

"About that marriage," he began. "What do you know about it?"

"Only this. A woman claimed to have married X, as we shall call him, in Malta. There were no witnesses, she said, but the minister, his wife and an officer in a certain regiment. She wouldn't give the officer's name, and, as the minister and his wife had both died, she was laughed out of court and arrested. Later on you claimed to be the officer, and it was known you were in the regiment the woman mentioned. You said you had proofs, and you promised me to give assurance that they would not be used. In a way, you tricked me in Port Blair, but, while you have the pardon in your pocket and can not be arrested for anything you did prior to my giving it to you, I assure you that, if you do not satisfy me in regard to that wedding, you will regret it. Now, it's your turn."

The ex-convict laughed in a shamefaced manner.

"Here is the truth—I swear it—that marriage never took place!"

"What?" Sinclair gripped his arm.

"Never took place. It's true that X knew the lady, but there was no wedding. She thought she had been badly treated and asked my advice!"

Sinclair breathed deeply and nodded.

"Yes," went on Menzies, "and I, having heard of the death of a minister and his wife since X left Malta, suggested to the lady that she pretend that minister married her to X, with myself and the minister's wife as witnesses. I saw money in it, and I needed money. But the blackmail scheme did not work, and you know what happened. This paper will probably convince you more readily than I."

Sinclair looked curiously at the man. Was he really desirous of being decent? Was he sincere? He took the paper Menzies offered. He read what seemed like an agreement between two parties concerning the division of what money was obtained by pretending X had married one of the parties. The paper was signed by the woman in the case and by Menzies.

"I kept the agreement," said the ex-convict, "because, of course, the money would be paid to her, if any money was paid, and I wanted to have a hold on her. I thought that she might come to think that the use of my name wasn't worth much; so I took precautions. That's the whole story. You keep the paper. But she'll never make any more trouble. Not that I blame the girl. But she's married now. Funny world, isn't it?"

SINCLAIR found himself thinking things he never expected to think. Glad as he was at having the assurance that there would be no scandal, there was something in the way Menzies had

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told his story which brought unusual ideas. But not for a moment did he doubt that he had heard the truth. And he had. He found a curious fascination in reconstructing the events and in the part played by Menzies. What a life that man had led—if he could only be brought to tell about it!

And Sinclair felt he could now approach the subject of the expedition to the source of tuberculosis with a mind free from uneasiness regarding Menzies' freedom. He decided to get down to business at once, to figure on the money required, the stores to be bought, the length of time likely to be needed and such things. So he asked Menzies to give him a detailed statement.

"Gladly," replied the ex-convict, who was now spending his crime-gained money in luxurious living. "By the way, there are a number of things I wish to enlighten you about, as well. Let me take you for a drive before dinner tonight?"

To which the *Burra Sahib* assented, stipulating, however, that he must be home before eight o'clock.

In a high-wheeled dog-cart the ex-convict drove his guest, behind a high-stepping animal which caused fashionable Calcutta to admire and Sinclair to enjoy the ride. Menzies was as entertaining as ever, his witty sallies keeping the *Burra Sahib* vastly entertained, until, passing the cemetery, Menzies suddenly pulled up.

"Excuse me," he said, "but graves have a peculiar fascination for me. Do you mind going in there with me? I have an interesting story to tell you."

Sinclair being willing, the ex-convict left the cart with the *sais* and led the way through the old gate—past graves that told the story of the British in India as nothing else could: graves of women, old and tired, young and waiting to be loved, but all reaching the same sudden end, far away from their place of birth. And graves of captains and officers of the old East Indiamen, when it took many months to reach India from England and when sail was shortened for the night—archaic times they seem, but in their day the height of progress; times now as weed-grown as the graves of those making them.

Something like this was in the minds of both men as they sat down upon a flat tombstone to smoke. Then Menzies spoke:

"I have done a number of clever things in my life, but gaining my freedom was the most brilliant." He turned to Sinclair. "Please don't interrupt me until I have told you all I have to tell. You see, I had made the world too hot to hold me. Wherever I turned, I faced arrest, and I knew that, if I were brought to trial, it meant imprisonment for life. I had no desire to end my days in jail. I wanted to enjoy the money I had worked so hard for. So, the first thing I had to do was to make sure I would not be tried. Therefore, I mentioned that I was the witness to that wedding. Authority was therefore afraid to bring me into court, because of the scandal I might create and because authority was still in doubt as to whether the wedding had or had not taken place. So I was sent to the Andamans without trial, thus escaping a life sentence, which was what I had aimed at.

"Now, long ago, before you saved India, I heard about you, and—" Sinclair was about to interrupt. "No, no. Please hear me through. You can ask questions afterward. I want you to get this straight. Very well, I had heard of you, and I realized that you were the only man with enough influence to get me my freedom. I found out that you were interested in bacteriology and believed, as I did, that there was a place where the bacteria of tuberculosis bred so fast that humanity could not overcome the disease. I also knew of your humane principles—that you would do almost anything to stop the spreading of the white plague.

"I therefore let it be known that I knew where the bacteria have their breeding-place and that the price of my information was my freedom. As I expected, you rose to the fly and sent your man, Sesson, to see me. But you were worried about that wedding and wanted assurance that I would not give my 'proofs' to the world. You now know what my 'proof' was. Don't you think I engineered my freedom very cleverly?"

"You did." The *Burra Sahib* spoke shortly.

"So. And now all that I have to do is to show you where the bacteria breed. Of course, you don't expect me to spend the rest of my life showing you round the place. It will be enough, I presume, if I show you enough to enable you to find the rest of it yourself, eh?"

"It's a large place, then?" asked Sinclair.

"Very, and there is more than one."

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"Do you mean that I will not live long enough to blot all of it out?"

"Yes," replied Menzies gravely, "but you can start the good work."

"When can you show me the place?" Sinclair asked the question with a feeling of impending calamity—he felt that Menzies, while keeping to the letter of his agreement, had fooled him in much the same manner he had done about the wedding of X. He saw with apprehension that the ex-convict was suppressing a smile. Suddenly the latter got to his feet and waved his arm in a way that indicated the whole cemetery.

"It is here," he said, like Captain Nemo.

And then Sinclair understood. But the wonderful cleverness of the man—after all, fighting for his freedom—disarmed his anger. And it was true. This cemetery, filled with decaying corpses, was no doubt the source of the plague. This and countless other such places, scattered all over the world, had more to do with human disease than anything else. Not until cremation became compulsory would the world be clean.

But he was bitterly disappointed. Did not his being tricked this way show that opium might be weakening him? Was it worth it? Of course, he was getting old, and that had a lot to do with his dwindling powers, but. . . . He, also, stood up.

"I thank you," he said gently.

"What?" asked the astonished Menzies.

"A man is not a fool because he is a fool," said the *Burra Sahib* musingly, "but because he remains a fool. You have made a fool of me—shown me that I am a fool. For that I thank you—because I do not intend to remain one!"

THE RESERVATION

by LYDIA M. D. O'NEIL

A NATION within a nation,
Beyond and apart and alone—
This is the Reservation,
With a creed and a code of its own.
Though their conquerors be their warders,
Here must the conqueror pause;
For here are the red man's borders,
And within are the red man's laws.

Some speak in the white man's manner;
Some pray to the white man's God;
Some follow the white man's banner,
But here on their ancient sod,
On the heights of the gray old mesas
And the stretches of desert drear,
The beautiful Indian phrases
Fall strange on the white man's ear.

They are garbed in the tribal fashion;
They follow their fathers' faith;
And Progress, the white man's passion,
To these is a weakling wraith.
Futile the touch of his fingers,
Back his advances are hurled;
And this page from antiquity lingers
In the heart of the white man's world.

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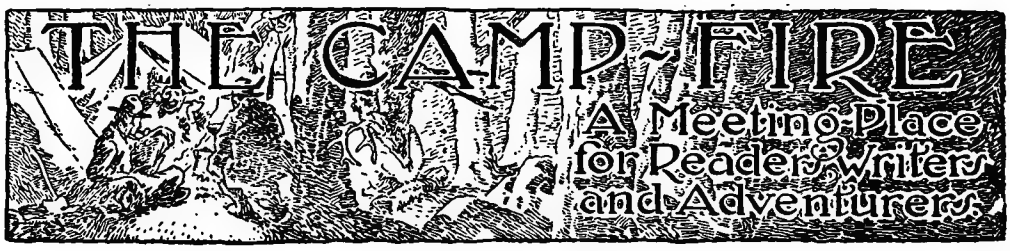

SOME close-up data on the James boys from one of us who is in a position to know the facts:

When I read what E. A. Brininstool had written about the James boys I was moved to put my oar in. I was living up there in that part of our country when they tried to rob the Northfield bank. It was Jesse James who shot the cashier. He had gone in the vault and Bob Younger was holding the cashier up with two guns. The cashier, Heyward, saw Jesse pass in, leaped from his stool, slammed the vault door and tried with all his power to turn the combination. Bob jerked him back and opened the door. Jesse came out mad, put his gun against Heyward's head and killed him. Plain, dirty murder.

I KNEW Bill Chadwell very well. Have ridden with him many times when he carried the mail along our highway. Good-natured, obscene roughneck without very many brains. Frank James got hurt twice in that fight. The village blacksmith had a Sharps rifle and he climbed to the roof of his shop, stood behind the square front and killed Bill. Then he plugged Frank in the leg and the same ball killed his horse. Before that the Methodist preacher had come out with a muzzle loading shotgun and filled Frank with chicken-shot, but he had a heavy rubber coat on and it kept the shot from going deeper than just through the skin.

When Frank lost his horse he got behind some boxes and shot from there. As the bunch broke for safety he hobbled out and yelled, "For God's sake, boys, you aren't leaving me, are you?" Then Jesse wheeled and took him up behind.

A funny thing is that a clerk in a store turned that band back three times with an empty .32 caliber gun, by jumping out and throwing down on them as they came galloping by. I knew one of the men in the posse with the sheriff when they found the Younger brothers and Pitts and Miller in the woods. He always insisted that the best man in the posse in point of cool work and fine shooting was a boy of seventeen.

BILL CHADWELL was the only one killed in Northfield. Miller got his in the woods, when Bob and Jim and Cole got punched full of holes. Jim had half his face shot off there. Bill was shot by the Sharps and the ball ranged downward from just below the collar-bone across to the opposite hip. It muxed him up badly inside. Not much left whole in there after it passed.

Bob Ford organized the Merchants Patrol in Los Angeles and ran it for a long time. I might tell you of one of us who served under him, but I won't.

ONE thing I learned when the gang came to Northfield. That was, that I knew plenty of men who could handle a six-gun better than those chaps handled theirs in that fight. This talk about their being crack shots that could snuff a candle or clip a tossed dollar as it flew is all bosh. I shot with one such bandit once and he had nothing on me and acknowledged it. He had such a "rep" that he was hired by Buffalo Bill for three years, as an exhibition rifle expert. Yah! I skinned him twice in contests and had done no practising for two years when we met. Camouflage! Bombast! This great skill attributed to bandits. They simply don't let the other chap have a chance, that's all.

When the gang came to Northfield, they all went into a store kept by old Berkey, a German. He sold them shoes and they took him over to the saloon for some beer. I asked him what he did next day, when the shooting began. He told me.

"Mein Gott! I run me down cellar und lay me mit mein belly in der dirt. I bet you I been lower as dat if dot dirt vas not too hardt to dig mit mein fingers, alretty. Gott, yes! You pet me!"—E. E. HARRIMAN.

HERE are some bits taken from a letter from S. B. H. Hurst concerning his story in this issue. I have, contrary to our custom, not cut out a paragraph speaking a good word for the magazine. Some of you know it already—hundreds of you have reported the same thing, and others may be interested. For, after all, it *is* "our magazine." To a very remarkable degree the men on your side of the editorial desk and the men on our side of it have forgotten that the desk is there and have just sort of gone along together. Not only have we here in the office tried to make the magazine of real service to you besides furnishing amusement, but the rest of you—or the rest of us—have in hundreds of ways and on thousands of occasions helped to make it more useful, more accurate and more entertaining. "Our magazine" is not just an empty editorial phrase and so, once in a while, I feel warranted in passing on to you a bit of good news about our magazine, or some of the friendly words spoken about it, knowing that it will please many of you just as it does us in the office.

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Incidentally, don't ever think, just because when we print a letter from one of you and omit from it something you've said in favor of the magazine, that your words didn't make us feel good inside or that we didn't appreciate your taking the trouble to say them.

Seattle, Wash.

YOU ask "Couldn't he chew some opium?" It is rather curious, but no user of opium ever changes his method of taking it. The user of a hypodermic feels sick at the idea of eating morphine, and a smoker must have his pipe. Besides—and this is the real reason—there is always the delightful anticipation of the smoke deferred. You will find that no user of opium will find fault with my story from that standpoint. (I do *not* speak of cocain, mind you.)

THERE is always a source—must be—of all disease, but of course the idea here is only one of those queer notions which some men get, and *M.* takes advantage of it. It may seem strange that so intelligent a man has the idea of a source of T. B., but the best chess player I ever knew startled me with advocating it, with many other queer notions. For instance, he believed he could absorb chlorophill, when any book on organic chemistry would have told him that no animal can absorb it, except some low form of flagellata. I had this man in mind when creating the *composite* character of the *Burra Sahib*. I don't think it hurts the tale.

PHRENOLOGY has been shown to be absurd, but many people still swear by it, and numbers of pseudo scientific men make a living by reading bumps, as you know. Indeed, I have been fool enough to have my own read, when all the time I knew that the morphology of the brain did not indicate as the "professor" said it did.

However, all through I have written from the subjective standpoint of a user of opium—the story is almost a psychological tract on the lapses of an intelligent man under opium—which makes, as you observe, the *Burra Sahib* do and say things which seem childish.—S. B. H. HURST.

P. S.—I collect old books, and it may interest you to know that the second-hand book men here tell me that they hardly ever have a second-hand copy of *Adventure*. As fast as they come in, they are re-bought, while *all* other magazines pile up by the thousand.

HERE'S hoping that this comrade got away for at least a little while on the outward trail. And that he came back satisfied and content again with the cabin and the cats and the garlic:

Oceano, Calif.

Gentlemen of the Camp-Fire: Again I greet you! and this time in gratitude. I who am old have been cheered by your letters and remembrances of the times that were, and before many moons have shone down on the lonesome trail I expect to count coups with at least one Pale-faced warrior, who was and is of my own kind. Huston writes. He is coming! Headed again for the north. Who knows but I will put the pack-saddle on my ancient mule and drift again with him to the northwest, just to camp again on the trails of our youth? Plenty Coups, of the Absaraka; Cut Mouth John of the Klickitat, Spotted Elk of the Sioux (totem of the Bear) or even Washakie of the Shoshones would turn over in their graves and double the horse herders, if they knew that Huston and I were making our medicine again.

OLD? Yes, but our hearts are yet hot. I've got a cabin and some cats and a garden, that grows garlic and dahlias. But, after all, a cabin is only a cabin, and the long trail has no end. We are Pagans "and the Red Gods give us no rest." I know a place in the lava beds of Modoc, where the skeleton of a warrior is hiden in the rocks yet (if some fool sheep-herder has not found him). He is branded between the eyes with a .45 caliber hole. I know a place on the bank of the Rogue River in Oregon where a poor little tenderfoot kid staked out his first placer claim in 1874. And I am grieving tonight to hit the trail in the morning.

If some of you fellows would wrap Huston and his kind up in a blanket and hog-tie 'em, so they couldn't make signs, maybe I might be contented to raise cats and garlic. I've got an ancient mule of the Spanish breed. Some say she is a jennet. But if she is, Pegasus must have been her sire, so if our comrade of the long trail comes, we may sing. HIACK CLATTAWA, COPHA SIAH; CAR SALMON MAMOOK PLAY. NISIKA ISCUM TENAS CUETINS PE, OKOKSUN CLATTAWA SIAH. (Chinook).

Translated:

Harry go far away
Where the salmon play
And we'll have few ponies
When the daylight fades away.

Long live the Camp-Fire.—E. C. ST. CLAIRE.

SLEEP—a word about it from Charles Wesley Sanders in connection with his story in this issue:

Madison, Ohio

SLEEP, which brought trouble to *Haggerty*, has been responsible for many tragic and for some ludicrous things on railroads. In the days before the law limited the hours of work for railroad men, crews would very often be "first out" when they came into a terminal. That is to say, they would have to turn about and make another trip over the road without rest. Nowadays, when an engineer has worked a certain number of hours, he is relieved, no matter where his train happens to be.

When sleep comes to man when he is on railroad duty, it is an overwhelming thing. He feels more as if he had been drugged than as if he were just naturally sleepy. In those circumstances sleep seems to be more powerful than in ordinary circumstances. Perhaps that is because a man knows he must not sleep and therefore wants what he should not have.

I HAVE had some curious experiences with this sleepiness. When I worked in a general office once, I customarily cleared with the Buffalo yards about midnight. The operator at Buffalo, instead of sounding the office call, would say: "G. M. DS." That is, "Good morning, Sanders." I was only

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a kid and one Fourth of July I didn't go to bed at all. When I got to the office at seven o'clock my lids were heavy. I cleaned up what work there was and went over by the window and sat down in a big chair. Sleep immediately hit me on the point of the jaw.

The next thing I remember I heard Buffalo say, "G.M. DS." That was the only conscious moment I had, so far as I could recall afterward. The next conscious moment came at five o'clock in the morning. Buffalo was "calling his arm off." I answered.

In those days all messages and reports for the general superintendent were copied in a book. Such a report was usually the first thing Buffalo sent. The book lay on the table and written across the page was the word "Buffalo" and the date. Following this a line wabbled down the page for several inches.

"Didn't you get it?" Buffalo asked.

"I didn't," I had to confess.

"Gee!" he said, "I sent you the whole business but I didn't get any O.K. Well, here goes."

I must have risen from the chair by the window, walked over to the table, answered Buffalo, started to write in the book, risen again, and gone back to the chair, while Buffalo, unsuspecting, kept pounding out the report to me.

And I must have done it in my sleep.—C. W. SANDERS.

REMEDIES for snake-bite. Frank W. Ryan, seeing the question brought up at Camp-Fire, wrote in giving, from memory, the methods used by Raymond L. Ditmars, Curator of Reptiles, N. Y. Zoological Park, New York City. In order to be sure in so important a matter, I sent Mr. Ryan's letter to Mr. Ditmars and received the following reply:

Referring to the enclosed would say that it is essentially correct. I am enclosing a booklet that gives some additional information. Abercrombie and Fitch of this city handle a snake-bite outfit.

Antivenomous serum is now used when possible. You will find mention of it in the booklet. It may be obtained from the Pasteur Laboratories of America, 366-8 W. 11th St., New York.

RAYMOND L. DITMARS.

Our thanks to both Mr. Ryan and Mr. Ditmars and, since the subject is a vital one to any man wandering in snake country, here are some quotations from "Poisonous Snakes of the United States; How to Distinguish Them," by Raymond L. Ditmars—what he calls a bird's-eye view.

Please note that our old Camp-Fire pet and argument, the Gila Monster, is here authoritatively branded venomous. We'll hear more about him later.

THE following is a condensed quotation from the booklet, exact and fairly full, with only minor changes for the sake of connection and with no changes affecting the meaning. The booklet itself can be secured by writing to Mr. Ditmars and enclosing twelve cents.

ONE hundred and eleven species of snakes are found in this country; *of this number seventeen are poisonous.* Besides, there are ninety-seven species of lizards; but of the latter only a single species is venomous and this is the Gila Monster, of the Southwest.

Practically every portion of the United States is inhabited by poisonous snakes. The majority of the species are found in the Southern latitudes, though the few Northern species are so abundant that venomous snakes are actually more common in some sections of Pennsylvania and New York than in the South.

LIST OF NORTH AMERICAN POISONOUS SERPENTS

Elapine Snakes

Common Coral Snake (Elaps fulvius) the Southeast. Sonoran Coral Snake (Elaps eurysanthus), the Southwest.

Crotaline Snakes

1. *The Moccasins*

Copperhead Snake (Ancistrodon contortrix), Eastern U. S. Water Moccasin (Ancistrodon piscivorus), the Southeast.

2. *Dwarf Rattlesnakes*

Massasauga (Sistrurus catenatus) Central Region. Pigmy Rattlesnake (Sistrurus miliarius), the Southeast.

3. *Typical Rattlesnakes*

Timber Rattlesnake (Crotalus horridus), Eastern U. S. Diamond-Back Rattlesnake (Crotalus adamanteus), the Southeast. Prairie Rattlesnake (Crotalus confluentus), Prairie Region. Pacific Rattlesnake (Crotalus oregonus), Pacific Region. Texas Rattlesnake (Crotalus atros), Texas to California. White Rattlesnake (Crotalus mitchellii), the Southwest. Tiger Rattlesnake (Crotalus tigris), the Southwest. Black-tailed Rattlesnake (Crotalus molossus), the Southwest. Price's Rattlesnake (Crotalus pricei), the Southwest. Green Rattlesnake (Crotalus lepidus), the Southwest. Horned Rattlesnake (Crotalus cerastes), the Southwest.

Classification of our Poisonous Snakes

THE North American dangerous snakes may be easily distinguished—except the two Coral snakes, which have a slender body and a head not at all distinct from the neck, in fact, looking precisely like the harmless reptiles. From the typical harmless snakes they differ only in possession of a very short, fixed pair of venom-conducting teeth in the forward part of the upper jaw—and by the absence of a small scale on each side of the head (the *loreal* plate), between the eyes and the nostril. Fortunately, such deceptive-looking reptiles are limited to two species in the United States. As they are peculiarly colored, they may be recognized with little difficulty.

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How To Tell the Coral Snakes

BOTH of the species of the *Elaps* inhabit the Southern part of the country. The Common Coral Snake or Harlequin Snake occurs from southern North Carolina to Florida and westward to Texas. It is most abundant in Georgia, Florida, Alabama, and Louisiana. The Sonoran Coral Snake is restricted to Arizona, New Mexico, and northern Mexico. Both of the species are vividly *ringed* with scarlet, yellow, and black—the red and black rings the broadest. Their pattern is wonderfully beautiful, imparting a really artificial aspect, like a gaudy necklace.

The pattern may be given as *broad, alternating rings of red and black, the latter bordered with very narrow rings of yellow.* And here we encounter a difficulty; for several harmless snakes "mimic" these species in displaying exactly the same colors arranged in ring-like fashion. Yet there is one unvarying difference that will always distinguish the dangerous reptile from their innocuous "imitators," *as the yellow rings of the poisonous snakes always border the black rings, while among the non-venomous snakes there are pairs of black rings bordering a yellow one.*

The Coral Snakes are rather secretive in habits and are often plowed up in the fields. They feed mostly upon small species of innocuous serpents.

The Poison Apparatus

THE Crotaline Snakes, the Rattlesnakes, Copperhead, and the Moccasin may be easily told. These snakes do not *sting.* The injury they inflict is a *bite, dealt with a pair of hollow teeth on the upper jaw.* These teeth have an opening at their tip for the ejection of venom. They are exactly like hypodermic needles, and mankind has, in fact, copied the structure of the serpent's fangs in manufacturing that invaluable instrument of medical surgery.

Each fang connects with a gland behind the eye, and this secretes a poison which Nature has intended to be used in purposes of killing the prey—incidentally for self-defense. When the mouth is closed the fangs fold back against the upper jaw.

The venom apparatus is in no way connected with the forked tongue. That organ is used solely for the purpose of feeling; hence it is not a sting.

How to Distinguish the Crotaline Snakes

WE MAY dispose of the Rattlesnakes with a simple suggestion, and that is to *look for the rattle,* a prominent and absolutely unique organ among snakes. Its presence immediately brands the owner.

It is a mistake to think that a poisonous snake may be told by a thick body and a flat, triangular head that is quite distinct from the neck. Many wholly innocuous species have exactly these outlines and many of them are proportionately stouter of body and uglier in appearance than the dangerous Copperhead Snake or Highland Moccasin.

The Moccasin and the Copperhead Snake

THE two North American Moccasins—the Water Moccasin, *Ancistrodon piscivorus* and the Copperhead Snake (Highland Moccasin or Pilot Snake), *Ancistrodon contortrix,* belong, as do the Rattlesnakes, to the subfamily of Pit Vipers—Crotalineo. On each side of the head, *between the eye and the nostril is a deep pit.* Here we have a character by which to determine them immediately. But there are other points: while our harmless snakes have two rows of plates on the under surface of the tail, these two poisonous species have a single row of plates for the greater length of the tail. Our harmless snakes have the pupil of the eye round; the Water Moccasin and the Copperhead Snake have an elliptical—catlike—pupil.

The Moccasin is dull olive, with wide, black transverse bands. It abounds in the swamps and sluggish waterways of South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, and Louisiana. The Copperhead Snake is pale, hazel brown; crossing this ground color are rich, reddish-brown bands narrow on the back and very wide on the sides—appearing, when examined from above, to have the outlines of an hour-glass. The top of the head often shows a decidedly coppery tinge, hence the popular name.

Poisonous Snakes in the Eastern States

IN THE New England States and the Middle Atlantic States, there are but two species of poisonous snakes. These are the Timber Rattlesnake and the Copperhead Snake. The Black Snake, Water Snake, Flat-Headed "Adder," Checkered "Adder," and other serpents with formidable titles found in those areas are absolutely harmless.

If we include the Lake Region and the Ohio Valley we must include another poisonous species, the Massasauga, a small rattlesnake of a slaty-gray hue marked with a chain of deep brown blotches.

South of central North Carolina, thence throughout the Gulf States, we find several more venomous species, as follows:

The *Diamond Rattlesnake.* Largest and most deadly of any of the North American serpents. It attains a length of eight feet and is beautifully marked with a chain of yellowish rhombs on an olive ground-color.

The *Pigmy Rattlesnake.* A diminutive, slaty-gray species, closely related to the Massasauga. There are jet-black blotches on the back and a reddish band on the neck.

The *Water Moccasin.* A semi-aquatic species.

The *Coral Snake.* Previously described.

The Timber Rattlesnake and the Copperhead Snake range southward to the northern portion of the Florida peninsula. In the extreme South the Copperhead also extends its range westward to the Rio Grande, in Texas.

Erroneous Theories Concerning Poisonous Snakes

IT IS quite wrong to imagine a poisonous snake springs at an enemy. It never jumps from the ground and seldom strikes more than a third its length. Poisonous snakes never chase an enemy. Their attitude toward man is merely that of self-defense.

It is not necessary for a rattlesnake to coil before striking. It can strike from a crawling position provided the neck can be doubled into an S-shaped loop to lurch the head forward.

It is impossible to render a venomous snake permanently harmless by extracting the fangs, as a number of auxiliary fangs are ready to take the place of the functional pair within a couple of weeks.

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Treatment of Snake Bite

WHAT to Carry in the Field. Every field naturalist and prospector venturing into regions known to be the lurking places of venomous snakes should carry certain articles to be used in case of accident. These are comparatively simple. Following is a list of them:

A hypodermic syringe; a rubber ligature; several sharp scalpels (or a razor); a jar of antiseptic gauze; material for outside bandage (boiled cheesecloth); a jar of permanganate of potassium (crystals); several tubes of anti-toxin (anti-venomous serum); some strychnine tablets; a flask of whisky.

The entire outfit can be carried in the capacious pockets of an ordinary khaki shooting-jacket, if necessary. The writer speaks from experience.

What to Do if Bitten. Invariably, the injury is upon some part of the arm or leg. *Everything depends upon the promptitude in performing the first two precautions.*

1st. Apply the ligature a short distance above the bite. Thus the ligature should be carried in a pocket that is immediately available, without a second's loss in a fumble.

2nd. Enlarge the punctures by cutting into them, *at least as deep as they are.* Make two cuts over each, these cuts crossing one another. This cutting starts a flow of the poisoned blood, which should be accelerated in every way possible. It is not dangerous to suck the blood away providing there are no cuts or fresh abrasions in the mouth or on the lips. In this way much venom may be drawn from the wounds. If a stream is near by, wash the wounds thoroughly, then bathe them repeatedly in a solution composed of permanganate of potash crystals in water to produce a deep wine color.

If no doctor is near by, the antitoxin should be injected by means of the hypodermic syringe, in some part of the body where it will gain the general circulation—preferably under the skin of the abdomen. In a succeeding paragraph it will be explained where this product may be obtained.

IF CONSTITUTIONAL symptoms develop—weakness and giddiness, a hypodermic injection of strychnine must be administered. As a stimulant, taken in very moderate quantities, brandy is invaluable.

After the wounds have been thoroughly bled and washed with the permanganate, the ligature may be removed, but not until every measure has been employed to draw the venom from the bitten part; these measures including suction and massage.

At this stage there is but one thing to do if that is possible. Journey to the nearest doctor of repute; for grave symptoms, beyond the power of any but a medical man to combat, may possibly develop.

IF A doctor is out of the question, keep your head. You will need to think, and with great care. Take a cathartic. Keep the wounds absolutely clean and remember that tissue that has been weakened by snake poison is peculiarly susceptible to common blood poisoning. Pack small bits of gauze into the wounds to keep them open and draining, then dress over them with gauze saturated with any good antiseptic solution. Keep the dressing saturated and the wounds open for at least a week, no matter how favorable may be the symptoms.

The writer has talked with many men of good, practical reasoning powers, who have been bitten by snakes and entirely recovered, while miles from civilization. They have employed methods similar to those described.

Before leaving the town behind you, consult a good doctor. Learn how to use properly a hypodermic syringe and the amount of strychnine your system will endure.

THE antitoxin, technically known as Anti-Venine, is a foreign product and apparently the best of the so-called antidotes for snake bite, as it is manufactured and does its work along lines well understood and practical. It may be obtained from the agencies of the Pasteur Institute, one of which is situated in New York City.

Once again let the writer advise the sufferer:

Keep your head. Do not give way to despondency. There is every reason why a healthy man should recover, and quickly too, from a bite from any of the greater number of the venomous snakes in the United States. But the proper means to save life should be executed promptly and systematically.

THE THREE AMERICAN LEGIONS

I HAVE just very gladly given my written consent, as a director of the American Legion, Inc., to the use of that name by the national organization of American veterans of the recent war, the "new G. A. R."

Our older readers know that the original American Legion was started by this magazine in the Summer of 1914, received the endorsement of Theodore Roosevelt and Major-General Leonard Wood, was incorporated early in 1915 and, despite entire lack of encouragement and even against direct discouragement from the Wilson administration, went ahead with its work, reached a membership of some twenty-five thousand men trained in war or in some of the trades and professions needed in modern warfare. Military authorities characterized it as the most practical step that had been taken for Preparedness. Every effort was made to prevail upon the Government to take over the organization and develop it into one of our strongest resources for national defense, but there is no need to dwell upon the pacifist attitude of the Administration at that time. It not only refused to take over the Legion's work but peremptorily ordered the Army and Navy officers who were among the Legion's active workers at its headquarters to cease giving it any assistance.

LATER the Legion made many efforts to persuade the National Council for Defense to take over and use its invaluable classified records, with only brief and

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uninterested refusals as a result. Finally, however, they consented to allow us to deposit our records with them. The Legion, after a fight of several years, realized the Wilson Administration could not be shaken in its determination not to adopt this and other definite Preparedness measures, and, not wishing to go on taking dues from its members in those circumstances, ceased active operations.

Then the war really came, despite those who said there could be no more war for this country. What the Administration could have done through the Legion, carefully and economically through several years, had to be done the other way in a few months.

Then, when it was too late for the nation-wide results that could so easily have been attained, the Administration did use the Legion, the Legion it had held down to twenty-five thousand instead of the two hundred and fifty thousand it might have had in its need. They didn't even let the Legion know it was being of service. Purely by accident we learned that the Ordnance Bureau had had a large force of clerks working from Legion records for months and that other Bureaus were waiting their turn. It wouldn't have been good politics for the Administration to admit its mistake in having refused to make any preparation for the war, to confess that it was being forced to use, after war was upon us, the very machinery it had refused to use when there was time for adequate Preparedness. And, anyhow, it was too busy telling the people what marvelous things it was now accomplishing, things that could have been done far more inexpensively and effectively if they had been done at the right time. But—well, if a private individual gives you a deal like that you mentally take his number and pass him up.

LATER the Legion's duplicate records were offered to those who were desperately seeking skilled labor for ship-building—records giving the names and addresses of men trained to the various special work needed and pledged to respond to a call for their services. There was not even a reply to the letter.

Later the duplicates were offered to the Marine Corps. No blindness or sleepiness there. Very promptly some husky marines appeared with a truck and rumbled off with those store-boxes filled with records.

The main point is that our Legion, against all discouragements and heavy odds, was too soundly practical not to be of decided value when the crisis came and we have reason to be very proud of the organization we of the Camp-Fire originated and built up among ourselves for half a year before it was taken up by all the newspapers of the country and put on a national basis.

THERE was the second American Legion—the Americans who went to France with the Canadians because they couldn't wait any longer for our own country to realize that she should and must fight the Hun. A fine body of men, but not in any way to be confused with our American Legion, the original.

And now the third American Legion is with us, the greatest of them all, and very, very welcome to our name, for there are many of you who belong to both the first and third, and some who belong to all three, and I know that none of you will be any less willing to pass on the name than I am—who, as it happens, first thought of it for our first organization.

The new American Legion is likely to become a tremendous force in national affairs and we of the Camp-Fire have some very special reasons for interest and pride in it.

Good luck to it, and may it become a force for clean democracy.

A WORD from Robert J. Pearsall concerning his story in this issue of our magazine, taken from his letter to me when he first sent in MS.:

Berkeley, Calif.

Herewith "Undue Influence," a rather short tale, but one I think you'll like. You'll observe *John Partridge* appears again, the principal character in "Rogues' End," and the subject of my last letter to you. In my next tale he will be on the China Coast; but I've another man picked for principal character.

Perhaps I'd better say that I got the central idea of "Undue Influence," the use of oxygen as a befuddling agent, from an editorial in the *Scientific American* of April 6, 1912. Indeed, I've made *Partridge* quote that editorial in one paragraph which you'll notice. But I think the unduly stimulating effect of oxygen is commonly known. I remember the propriety of its use by athletes was much discussed a few years ago; but it was commonly condemned as unsportsmanlike and injurious, and barred out along with other drugs.—ROBERT J. PEARSALL.

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QUITE a few of you have called our attention to the fact that "The Human Bloodhound," by Captain R. S. Carpenter, which appeared in our Mid-June issue, had previously been published by another magazine under another title with another name as author. A plain break on our part, of course, and naturally we are very sorry it happened.

The only pleasant thing about it is that our readers, with their usual personal friendliness to "our magazine," were prompt to give us the facts and nearly all did so in complete understanding of how such things occur.

One or two, however, accused us flatly of trying to "put something over" on our readers, seeming to have the idea that we had deliberately taken a story from another magazine in order to save buying one. To any one with even a faint understanding of the magazine business, such an idea is ridiculous. There could be no surer way for a magazine to commit suicide than by intentionally following such a policy. Furthermore, our books show that we paid Captain R. S. Carpenter—or at least made out our check to that name—for the story just as we pay for all our other stories. In this issue we have, for the second time in the magazine's existence, republished something from our own pages, with that fact plainly stated and because there was demand from our readers for republication. Once or twice we've quoted from other publications in "Camp-Fire," but always with credit. But never have we knowingly "lifted" anything from any other publication.

I CONFESS these fiery accusers make me sick at the stomach. If they are too crabbed to assign anything but crooked motives to others they might at least use their brains as well as their mouths. "Evidently," says one of these superior beings, "you don't read the other magazines." Of course I don't. Some of them, of course, but how would it be possible for any man to hold down a very full-time job and read *all* the stories in *all* the other magazines, even if he slept only five hours a night, ate no meals and never dreamed of taking any recreation or a bath? Could *you* do it? Could our ready critic do it? Four to five thousand manuscripts a year come into this office. That makes quite a little reading itself even for more than one man. I've been reading our own manuscripts at home till midnight these past several nights. A fine chance I have of reading all the other magazines.

I don't think you've ever found me hesitate to admit my mistakes frankly, but I'm just as quick to fight when anybody tries to hang on me something that is entirely unjust.

All magazines are occasionally victimized by plagiarists. The plagiarists don't last long and very often they get caught at their first attempt, but when they do get away with it there's nothing to do, for either readers or editor, but cuss, blacklist that writer with other magazines, put him behind bars if you can and keep on guarding against them in the future.

I know I don't need to explain all this to most of you, but if there are any more narrow-gage, non-thinking dyspeptics among you I want them to get the facts.

WHY not? I'm not eligible but I'd like to see that club formed. Here is a piece of a letter from Edgar Young the rest of which dealt mainly with details concerning his story in this issue:

Brooklyn.

He has asked me to request you to have a little call put in Camp-Fire for all the trail hitters to register. He is especially anxious to hear from any of the old bunch of "Typical Tropical Tramps," or "TTT'S" that were organized by Ed Burke, at Zacapa, Guatemala, many years ago, and anybody else who has hiked trails in Central and South America. He has made the transcontinental trip from Ecuador to the Amazon, down the Napo, from both Quito and Riobamba, and has walked many trails in Central America.

HE CALLS attention to the fact that Joseph Abner (*Cabrón*) Brown died friendless, without a penny, in a New Orleans hospital. Brown had staked hundreds and wrote a letter to a friend at Huigra, Ecuador, asking for help. This letter was recognized as being from him and opened by the Americans at Huigra, for the party he had written to had gone. They cabled him money which did not reach him before he died. Brown is the only man who is supposed to have gone down through the San Blas Indian country endwise and made the trip alive. He went in from the Canal Zone and came out at Esmeraldas, according to Tropical Tramp tradition. I think we can scare up at least five hundred trail hitters. Their addresses are changing constantly. "Lanky" Moore walked from Lake Titicaca to Sao Paulo, Brazil. Two partners, Hart and James, went in from Manaos, in 1910, to cross from there.

A few words from some of these men might prove interesting dope for Camp-Fire but it is a hard matter to get them to open up with a letter. I know of

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several who are here in New York. It might be there is enough of them to start a club of some kind. EDGAR YOUNG.

I DON'T want to start anything but I want to say something and say it loud. Nothing new. Many of you are thinking the same thing. The Regulars. There's so little printed about them. The papers are filled with columns about the local volunteers and draft men, the noble work they did, their glorious welcomes home. But the Regulars don't even get home as a rule. Most of them are dead or, at this writing in late May, still on duty at the front. They probably won't get any particular welcome when they do get home. They're just Regulars anyhow.

Just the Regulars. Just the backbone of our Army in war and peace. Just the only thoroughly trained soldiers we have. For, even out of the finest material in the world and by the most intensive methods, you can't make a thoroughly trained soldier in six months or a year. Say all you please in praise of our boys who were not Regulars and I'll subscribe to it. But I make this point—they'd have been even better and even more effective if they'd had more training. Among other things it takes years, not months, to instil thorough, absolutely dependable discipline, no matter how good and willing the material. And the lack of such discipline is inevitably measured in the casualty lists if not in the matter of victory versus defeat.

JUST the Regulars. Dig out their war record and see how it stands comparison. Take a look at the recognition they got and see how it does *not* stand comparison.

Oh, yes, they're just the Regulars, but I wish I had a whole hat-store of hats to take off to them. Regulars of Army, Navy and Marine Corps. The Marines, being efficient from cellar to attic, see to it that the public gives them the credit they deserve. The Navy, through no fault of its own, did not see action on so large a scale as did the Army and does not get the recognition it should. But the Army Regulars, the boys who went into the worst there was, did the job as well as any troops that ever lived could do it, and get less recognition than any other kind of fighting-man we've got. They get mine, all of it, and, take our Camp-Fire by and large, I don't think the Regulars will find another bunch who more appreciate what they've done and what they are.

Salute!

ADVENTURE'S new companion magazine, *Romance*, expects to make its appearance this Fall. It wants stories of action, but, being addressed to both men and women, the love-interest will play a more prominent part than it has ever been allowed to do in *Adventure*, but not the kind of love-story that is merely fluff and sugar. Nor will there be any salacious sex appeal.

Like *Adventure*, its field is the whole wide world and its preference is for outdoor stories. *Adventure* seldom uses stories of the future; *Romance* is open to them, as well as to stories of the present and the past.

We're trying to make it a real magazine for real people, and I think I'm safe in saying it's worth a trial by all of you. Its first serial by Joseph Conrad, master of sea-stories, will be looked forward to by all of you who know his work.

CAMP-FIRE buttons now ready. Details given on the following page. From those who have already got theirs come many words of strong commendation and not a single criticism. So I think you're not likely to be dissappointed in the button when you get it.

Though its size is plainly stated, a few voiced pleased surprise over finding it small, neat and tasteful, instead of being big and conspicuous. You can lay three or four of them on a dime. And yet its quiet, simple design is so unique that it stands out sufficiently to serve its practical purpose.

—ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

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LOOKING AHEAD FOR DEMOCRACY

If the writer of the following letter had signed his name to it I should have had at least some respect for him as one who speaks his mind frankly. Anonymous letters are in a class by themselves.

But I print it because, unfortunately, a good many other Americans have the same attitude toward the threats of revolution now rumbling under our feet. They can see only a future exactly like the present, and their understanding of the present is limited to their very limited understanding of the past. A few years ago they were sure there could never be another war; when war came they were equally sure this country would not be involved. Through all our history, lacking foresight themselves, they have opposed those who stood for adequate provision for the future.

The trouble is that the chief kind of patriotism they know is national self-conceit; the only remedy they know is a refusal to see the evils that need remedy; their only argument is boastfulness; the only tool they know, when driven to the point where they must use tools, is the ax.

THE writer of this letter has no faint conception of the hold that Bolshevism, for example, has taken in this country, of the efficiency and power of its organized propaganda, of how many people are beguiled by its unsound promises and made into malcontents by its systematic brewing of bitterness—people who realize our political and economic ills and are offered no other adequate program that even promises to cure these ills.

And, says he, if they do do anything, we'll use force! It is very true that, if they attempt a general campaign of terrorism in this country, they will get a reaction they do not want. But is that the only step we need to take?

For every violation of the people's law the force of the people's law is the right and needed remedy. But force can be only a temporary remedy, a stopgap. Back of these insurrectos is an idea, an unsound one, but an idea. You can not kill even an unsound idea with physical force. If you try, you are more likely merely to create publicity and "martyrs," both of which are very much desired by the insurrectos.

Nor can you kill their idea with boastings, or fact-suppression, or perversions of the truth.

By all means use force without stint when the people's law sanctions and demands it. But force alone is not enough.

The Bolshevist idea is unsound and can be killed, but nothing can kill it except facts and truth. And nothing can adequately check the flow of adherents to this idea except the presentation of some other comprehensive idea that offers as quick and as full escape from the evils, real and imaginary, that they find in our present system.

AS ALREADY set forth in this series of talks, our present system is more sound and more democratic than either Bolshevism or Socialism. But it badly needs repairs. Its machinery has slipped from the hands of the people at large. Only organized, systematic effort and education of the people will make it yield the justice and democracy it is abundantly able to yield. All of which ground has been more fully covered in this series.

It is absurd to expect a magic remedy. Neither Bolshevism nor any other system can wipe out the ills. For any new system must operate through the same imperfect citizenship material we have at present. The thing to do is to make that citizenship better. That is why the American League for Citizenship was incorporated. Slow work, without any glitter or hurrah, but sure work. And the only kind of work that can be of avail.

Here is the letter:

Milwaukee, May 8, 1919.

"Your crazy ravings in *Adventure* read with considerable amusement by the writer. What is the matter with you? It is too bad that they let such a white-livered fellow as you edit a magazine which is so widely read.

"You are afraid of the Bolshevic? Don't be afraid, you poor silly ass, because in America, in the good old U. S. A., lawlessness, murder and plunder will get just such a short shift as it always has. Do not forget that the U. S. A. has always dealt with the class of people, who include the I. W. W. and Bolshevic, with a promptness and despatch which makes a quick and complete job of it.

"Because an Austrian Jew by the name of Victor L. Berger has succeeded in being elected a Congressman it does not result that Milwaukee consists of similar hoboes. Because a few Russian Jews are buncoing you poor nuts in New York in the Ghetto it does not result that we are going to be murdered and killed off by the long-whiskered boys. No indeed, you poor simp—there are no theorists, robbers or murderers going to upset this U. S. A. Let

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them try it and I guarantee you they will go up in a redder mist of glory than they ever thought possible. What! You, an American, to cringe before a lot of soaks who are just looking for such easy marks? Do you admit fear when you are a traitor to even think of fear when the glorious Republic is spit on by these dirty Jews?

"Fight—Kill? Let them try it and they will find that they have stirred up a killing and fighting-match which will round them up in hell quicker than they ever dreamed of. They will find that the citizen of the U. S. A. is a different sort of a hair-pin to tackle than the degenerate sons of kings and their following. Kaiser Bill and his Prussian guards were cowards who ran away; we, the *real Americans*, will run—yes, to meet the bloody butchers and out-butcher them in defense of our Country."—NEMO.

A BOASTFUL, unthinking, blind and abusive letter. What soundness it has could have been made more effective by more intelligent methods. Bolshevism may well be called a Jewish movement, here and abroad. Perhaps it is true that the inner circle of capitalism is solidly Jewish and that, finding the present economic system is, by the law of diminishing returns, becoming less and less profitable for their purposes, these few are deliberately trying to wreck it in order to build up a new one yielding greater returns to their private pockets. Perhaps it is true that the Bolshevist propaganda is being largely financed from Wall Street.

Certainly there is one very strongly Jewish trade-mark stamped upon the Bolshevist and Socialist economic systems—the abandonment of private ownership of land. For the Jew has none of the feeling, common to most Gentile races, of attachment for the land. He is a trader, not a farmer. He comes of a race of nomads to whom land was only temporary grazing, Orientals and therefore traders, interested in the profits of doing, not, like the Western nations, in the doing itself or the means of doing. Naturally he has today no interest in private ownership of land and it is perhaps the one thing he abolishes most readily. Land is the other man's game, not his. And he prefers making the other man give up his own game and try to play the one at which the Jew is his superior.

AGAIN, if you will examine the list of those most prominent in Bolshevism in any country you will find a very high and disproportionate number of Jewish names.

Bolshevism may well be called a Jewish movement, but it does not follow that all Jews are Bolshevists, all Bolshevists Jews, or all Jews "dirty" and "hoboes." Nor does it stem the progress of the Bolshevist idea to sit back and mouth abuse.

The theory of Bolshevism's being really a Jewish movement is not my own. So far as I know, though he does not claim to be the originator, the theory as above set forth is original with Virgil Jordan, who has many a time helped me over a rough place in economics and sociology, but to me it is a very convincing one.

ABOLISHING private ownership of land. Taking just the human, common-sense point of view, I do not believe that, if it ever comes to pass, it can possibly last. In the average American or European the individual feeling for land, the home feeling, is too strong. It is ingrained, dating back to the days when the individual hut or cave was a necessity to safety and freedom, a place to be held and defended above all other places. The instinct that makes man cling to it is not a superimposed growth. He was born with it. Even the animals have it. It is part of life. If it is partly lacking in the Jew it is because it has been partly crushed out of him by circumstance; he, not the others, is the abnormality.

The test would come in the actual attempt. To take from a man land he is not living on is one thing, but to take from him what he lives on and uses is quite another. Naturally the farmers of the world object to this Bolshevist idea. The man who has no land now finds it a very pleasant idea. But suppose it goes into force and this same man is confronted with the cold, hard fact that, no matter how hard he works and saves and plans, he can never hope to have one single square foot of land that is *his own*, no spot in the world that is *home* in the sense that his blood and nature call for. Then, I think, he will change his mind.

Men in general are not likely to be long satisfied if they and their children are doomed to be merely a race of tenants, without hope of changing their condition. Nor, incidentally, does a tenant produce from the land so much as does an owner.

But all this, of course, is only an attempt to get at the common sense of the matter. The economic theorists would probably make short work of the idea. Which wouldn't necessarily prove that it isn't common sense.

BUT the anonymous letter has made me talk too long. The whole matter is really very simple. Capital has been giving us class rule until revolution begins to raise its head. The remedy the insurrectos offer is not a remedy at all. It merely asks us to change masters, to dethrone capital and put another class in its place as autocrat. The insurrectos complain against autocracy, class-rule, tyranny, injustice and violation of the people's rights. But their method of righting these evils is to employ the same evils themselves, and they can give us no security whatever that what they offer will be an improvement.

What the people should have, and are beginning to understand that they really want, is democracy, not the rule of either Capital or Labor. Nothing else will answer in the end. Will Capital realize that its rule must end and it itself be wrecked and trampled on unless it gives way to the rule of all the people? Will Labor see that it is sooner or later bound to face the same alternatives?

Will Capital realize, for example, that it is largely responsible for our revolutionary hot-beds because it has been importing cheap foreign labor in vast numbers and far beyond our present ability to Americanize it? Will Labor realize that in working for itself alone it is doing exactly what it complains of Capital's having done and is equally undemocratic, class-selfish and autocratic?

And, most of all, will the great mass of people who belong to neither extreme class see that they themselves must act for themselves or remain the victims of one or the other of these classes?—A. S. H.

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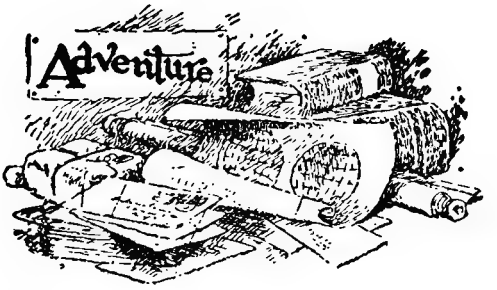

VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES FREE TO ANY READER

THESE services of *Adventure* are free to *any one*. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules*, thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

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A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn in lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, postpaid, anywhere.

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WILL SELL: Any copies from Jan., 1913, to May, 1916, also July, Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., 1916, for fifteen cents plus postage.—FRANCES J. MAUER, 601 W. 170th Street, New York City.

WILL BUY: Aug., Sept., Oct., and Nov. of 1916 *Adventure*, twenty-five cents each.—C. R. MEREDITH, 2437 E. Biddle Street, Baltimore, Md.

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 1833 S St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

High-School Volunteers of the U. S.—An organization promoting a democratic system of military training in American high schools. Address *Everybody's*, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

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Magazines are made up ahead of time. An item received today is too late for the current issue; allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

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Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. ★ Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1
B. W. BRINTNALL, 5527 Thirty-third Ave., N. E., Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S. and British Empire; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. ★ The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men local to the U. S. should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brintnall.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel, game, fish and woodcraft; furs, freshwater pearls, herbs; and their markets.

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DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Middle Western U. S. Part 1
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10. Western U. S. Part 2 and Mexico Part 1
(Editor to be appointed.) Covering Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and the border states of old Mexico: Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas.

11. Mexico Part 2 Southern
EDGAR YOUNG, 84 Court St., Brooklyn, N. Y. Covering that part of Mexico lying south of a line drawn from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, natives, commerce.

12. North American Snow Countries Part 1
R. S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Minnesota and Wisconsin. Hunting, fishing, trapping; canoes and snowshoes; methods and materials of Summer and Winter subsistence, shelter and travel, for recreation or business.

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17. North American Snow Countries Part 6
H. S. BELCHER, The Hudson's Bay Company, Ft. Alexander, Manitoba, Canada. Covering Manitoba, Saskatchewan, MacKenzie and Northern Keewatin. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel.

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22. Asia, Southern
GORDON MCCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

23. Philippine Islands
BUCK CONNOR, Box 807A.—R. F. D. No. 10, Los Angeles, California. Covering history, natives, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, exports and imports; manufacturing.

24. Japan
GRACE P. T. KNUDSON, Castine, Maine. Covering Japan: Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

25. Russia and Eastern Siberia
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26. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, Eagle Bird Mine, Washington, Nevada Co., Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

27. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Frederick, Md. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, etc.

28. ★ Africa Part 3. Portuguese East Africa
R. W. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Covering trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc.

29. ★ Africa Part 4. Transvaal, N.W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda and the Upper Congo
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ALBERT GOLDIE, Hotel Sydney, Sydney, Australia. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

FIREARMS, PAST AND PRESENT

Rifles, shot-guns, pistols, revolvers and ammunition. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district in question.)

A.—All Shotguns (including foreign and American makes). J. B. THOMPSON, Box 1374, St. Louis, Mo.

B.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers (including foreign and American makes). D. WIGGINS, Salem, Ore.

FISHING IN NORTH AMERICA

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

J. B. THOMPSON, Box 1374, St. Louis, Mo. Covering fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; live bait; camping outfits.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen. Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Commission, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

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The following "Ask Adventure" editors are now serving in our military forces. We hope you will be patient if their answers are at times delayed: Capt.-Adj. Joseph Mills Hanson; Major A. M. Lochwitzky.

Where Farmers Make Fortunes

THE Imperial Valley, California, seems to be the farmer's paradise. Three crops a year—$18,000 from 80 acres—but we'll let Mr. Harriman give you the cold, golden facts:

Question:—"What can you tell me about Imperial Valley, and in particular about the city of Imperial?

1. As to population.

2. As to climate. How does it compare with Stockton or Fresno? Or is there a better comparison? I lived in California fifteen years but left for the East about twelve years ago. I knew the

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country from San Francisco to Los Angeles, from Stockton to Fresno.

3. What is the principal business of Imperial Valley?

4. What fruits and farm products are grown to profit?

5. What can you tell me about the cost of living in Imperial? How would $3,000 to $3,500 a year there compare with $2,400 in Eureka, or at Vallejo?

6. Is Imperial a growing city? It was not on the map at all when I left California.

7. Is it as much out of the world as Eureka, for example—a place to bury one, professionally, if he were a school teacher, or a preacher, or a lawyer?"—THOS. F. CAMPBELL, New Haven, Conn.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—I will take up your questions in the order given and answer each as well as I can.

1. Population of Imperial Valley about 75,000; of Imperial City, 5,000.

2. Climate: Authority U. S. Weather Bureau. Average 312 sunny days per year; low relative humidity; particularly healthful climate. Warmest from May 15 to September 15. Highest temperature ever recorded at any station in valley, 119. Average in hot months, 105. Cool nights. Few cases of heat prostration ever known. Less steamy than Stockton. Like Fresno.

3. Principal business of valley: raising food products, forage and fibers.

4. Fruits and farm products grown to profit; this is a long one: Alfalfa, apricots, asparagus, barley, beans, Bermuda grass seed, cantaloupes, cabbages, carrots, cauliflower, cane, cotton, dates, figs, grapes, hay, lettuce, milo, olives, onions, peas, pears, potatoes, Sudan grass, tomatoes, pomelos, beef, pork, mutton, wool, butter, etc.

5. Cost of living, compared to Vallejo and Eureka: I see no reason why it should cost any more than either and it might be less in some respects. Less fuel, less heavy clothing, and possibly less for food.

6. Is Imperial a growing city? Looks like it, when it has 5,000 now.

7. Is it as much out of the way as Eureka? No. It is too easy to get into Los Angeles and San Diego for that. It is as good for a teacher, preacher or lawyer as any town of the same size.

Now for general information about the valley, from reliable sources. The valley produced $20,000,000 worth of food, forage and fibers in 1916. $32,000,000 worth in 1917. They add more acreage every year, under irrigation. Last year 70,000 bales cotton, the town of Imperial shipping 300 cars a month in 1917. Average return per acre gross, $80. Best in United States. No boll worm or boll weevil pests. Cleanest cotton in United States, raised and baled here. They are starting with Egyptian cotton this year and expect $150 gross per acre from that. Cost of the production and marketing estimated at $55, leaving $95, to which add $25 for seed sold, making net profit of $120 per acre on rented land.

The valley sold over six million dollars' worth of butter in 1916.

It has raised Duroc-Jersey hogs that run as high as 1,000 pounds each. It is common to see them from 400 to 700 each. Di Kamura, Japanese, has raised three crops in one year from the same field—barley, lettuce and corn. The lettuce returned $10,000 from fifty acres. He got $18,000 for eighty acres of cantaloupes. The valley raises immense numbers of hens and turkeys. Also, has an ostrich farm with 2,300 birds on it.

It has 5 union high schools, 50 elementary schools; combined force of teachers, 114. Schoolhouses are excellent in the valley.

About capital: J. M. Brown landed there seven years ago with $60 and went to work on a farm. Today he owns 80 acres, a fine herd of cows and is prospering daily. I would rather try the valley with half your cash than Eureka with all of it.

Juba Land, British East Africa

BEFORE going into the tropics, it's the wise man who learns what manner of folks and things, pleasant or otherwise, he must prepare to face:

Question:—"I am shortly going out as a radio operator to a station in East Africa Protectorate. The station is at Kismayu, Juba Land, and I shall probably be at other stations in Juba Land as well.

I should like you to tell me something of the district, especially of the living conditions, and the characteristics of the natives. I should be interested to hear of the superstitions and witchcraft of the latter. I should like to know of any out of the ordinary dangers and special precautions, and also what style of a small, handy revolver you would recommend."—L. A. WOODHEAD, Bradford, England.

Answer, by Mr. Beadle:—I am unable to give you any precise details of the particular district of Juba Land as I have never actually been there. But it is *Iknow-Kismayu*—on the coast—and therefore general climatic conditions apply. It is fairly hot and humid and probably mosquito-ridden, which means malaria.

There is no certain preventive against malaria that I am aware of. Various people, various theories. Some take five grains of quinine every day; others, on Koch's principle that the parasite takes twelve (about) days to develop, take ten grains every week on the obvious idea of soaking the possible agent before he gets busy. Again, others never touch quinine except when they actually are down with malaria.

Living conditions will probably be in a Government bungalow, with native servants or a mess; probable canned goods mostly, unless you happen to have a township near-by to get occasionally beef or goat. Eggs and chickens galore will probably be your chief article of fresh diet.

Neither clothes nor outfit would I advise you to bother about in England. You will most likely land at Mombasa where are stores from which you can get anything you want in tropical outfit for living or hunting.

General health hints are: take exercise, keep the bowels always open; that's the principal thing; don't drink; I mean excessively, as most are inclined to do in the monotony of up-country life. Drink has killed far more than malaria ever did; avoid being bitten by mosquitoes as much as possible; and never drink unboiled water.

Any make of revolver or automatic would do; but there is little possibility that you will ever

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need one. A shotgun would be more useful for sport and self-protection. Also, a rifle, say a sporting Mauser or .303, as you may get good shooting in the neighborhood.

Regarding witchcraft and superstitions: good Lord! that would mean a book or two. If ever, when you are out there in the years to come, when you have some of the dialects and you should come across any unusual beliefs or practices among the natives, I should be very glad to hear of them from you. Care of the Authors' League of America, New York, will always find me.

The Beaver

THIS interesting fur-bearer, where protected, is increasing rapidly. Mr. Catton gives an interesting account of the animal's habits, and tells a man in France how one of the few European beaver-colonies may be preserved:

Question:—"I take the liberty to apply to you for some information as regards to the breeding and keeping of beavers.

I wonder if there is such a thing as an establishment raising beavers, not under entirely domesticated lines, of course, but near to their natural habits of free life.

I am asking for this information not merely for what might one day be of some profit as regards to furs, but chiefly to develop the remnants of what has once been an important colony of beavers in France.

As there are still a few on the river going through my land, I should be very grateful for any special information you could give me.

And also: How to trap the first ones.

How to encourage and facilitate the breeding and a good selection.

How to keep them as far as possible within the area.

What special food to provide them with, beyond the natural food they search for themselves."—RENE METHOL, Nantes, France.

Answer, by Mr. Catton:—I can answer only for the North American beaver; but, as there is only the one species, their habits, family life, etc., will not vary greatly their habitat over.

The North American beaver measures up to two and one-half feet in length, ten inches of which would be tail, and stands nearly one foot in height. Its body is plump with an arched back, and its neck is thick. Its head is short, muzzle naked, ears short and scaly and admit of folding close to almost close the opening. The nose, too, is closable. The eyes are small. The four front chisel or gnawing teeth, two top and two bottom, are a bright orange color. Its tail is broad, flat, paddle-shaped and scaly, and will measure as wide as five inches in the larger specimens. Its two large hind feet are webbed, the front feet smaller and lacking the web, and all digits are clawed. It is usually reddish-brown above, fading to a lighter brown or even grayish underneath.

It is a bark eater, with a preference for cottonwood, birch, poplar, and willow, in that order; is fond of the roots of water-lily and other aquatic growths, and will, especially during its migrations, eat fruits, corn and other grains. It lives always near or in the water, in burrows, or lodges, according to locality.

If living in lodges, one lodge may measure eight feet in diameter by two or three feet in height, inside measurement, and house as many as six or eight members of one family. And when the food supply is abundant large numbers of families will form a community of lodges. The lodge is built of sticks, stones and mud, with walls from two to four feet in thickness, and carpeted with twigs, chips, and leaves; and may be built on a small island or at the water's edge on the bank of a stream or shore of a lake.

They mate in the Spring or early Summer of their third year, and the young couples immediately establish new homes for themselves. When increasing numbers begin to endanger the visible food supply, they migrate either up or down stream, these migrations taking place in Summer. But the old homes, if unmolested, are never entirely deserted as long as there is food in sight.

That is the North American beaver. If your beaver is the same variety you will readily see how difficult it would be to domesticate it. It would be quite possible to get it accustomed to the occasional and not too near presence of humans; but being a rodent to confine it is to supply the desire to get away. I know of no beaver-farms, though I haven't a doubt there are such things, and I would imagine that such an establishment would have to cover an immense amount of territory to be conducted on a paying basis. The food supply alone for any number, when you consider their natural diet, would be a serious proposition in any but a well wooded and watered large tract of uncultivated country.

The best plan to increase your colony, as has been proven here in Canada, is to give it its entire and unmolested freedom, protect it absolutely from its human enemies, and if its natural food supply becomes inadequate, supplement it with an abundance of, as nearly as possible, the same quality. Or in other words, leave it alone, feed and protect it from traps and rifles.

A metal box-trap, if you can induce them to enter it, would be the only way to catch an adult alive. But if you can manage to break open a lodge, and are lucky, you might catch the young beavers. Selection for breeding would be a matter of size and health only, as you are no doubt limited to a single variety.

The Old Sharps Rifle

IF IT could kill at a mile and a half, it was some rifle! But read what our expert, Mr. Wiggins, has to say about that famous shot made during the "Dobie Walls" fight:

Question:—"While running some lines for the Santa Fé in '87 and '88, I heard a story of a long shot made at Dobie Walls. One of the defenders wounded, some say killed, an Indian chief with a Sharps Buffalo gun .45-.90 or .45-.120; I have forgotten the exact size. The range was said to be a mile and one-half.

After a discussion one night, a mile and one-quarter was chained off. A 10 oz. wagon sheet was

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stretched on a pair of flags and a large black hat pinned in the center. One of the men who owned a Buffalo gun lay in a wagon bed, with a rest, and sent a ball through the hat and broke the sheet but the bullet did not go through it. I saw the shot fired and also the results. Is there any foundation to the yarn of the mile and a half shot? This of course was with the black powder and lead ball."—LOUIS G. MULLIKIN.

Answer, by Mr. Wiggins:—I am under the impression that the shot the Indian alluded to was made by W. B. (Bat) Masterson at the Adobe Walls fight, July 6, 1874. It certainly shows the carrying power and range of the old Sharps rifles, than which no better arms for heavy work at both long and short range were ever made.

From a story of the fight by the late Alfred Henry Lewis, I think the actual caliber of the rifle was .50-.120.875. While I never have heard otherwise of such a caliber or charge, it may have existed.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

DE BOLT, ALEXANDER E. Write your old-time bumkie.—Address BERNARD P. MCCLUNG, Ord. Dept., Ft. Wadsworth, N. Y.

BELKNAP, EARL. Of Rathdrum, Idaho. Will his mother or friends please write of his whereabouts to—PRIVATE ROY L. HILLER, Co. C., 59th Inf., A. E. F.

DUNCAN, FLOSSIE. Last seen and heard from was a Red Cross nurse in Louisville, Ky. Please write to your cousin.—PRIVATE REX THOMPSON, 10th Co., C. A. C., Fort Randolph, Canal Zone.

FLETCHER, R. A., UNCLE. Used to be a racehorse man. Any information as to his whereabouts will be gratefully appreciated by his niece.—Address MABEL GARNER, 3151 Calif. St., San Francisco, Calif., Presidio Apts., No. 10.

L. S. F. Your mother has moved from Oatman to Oakland, California. Write to her there, general delivery. She is anxious to hear from you—GRACE BROWN, Melrose Highland, Mass.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

COONERTY, M. C. When you see this, write me at my home address. Recently discharged from the service and anxious to locate you again. Letters written to you in France unanswered.—F. R. MAC.

HEYWOOD, WALTER. Of Lancashire, England. Your mother would like to hear from you. She has lost two sons in the war and is getting up in years. If you don't know her address, write.—ALBERT WOOD, Box 204, Roundup, Mont.

JOHNSON, A. L. or L. A. Ranchman contractor. Born in Gattland, Sweden. Age fifty-two, height six feet four inches, heavy set, complexion fair. Last heard from 1901 at Spearfish, S. D. or Dayton, Wyoming. Any information concerning him will be appreciated by his brother—Address ADOLPH JOHNSON 1614 N. Keeler Ave., Chicago, Ill.

GILLETT, FRANK M. Age fifty-two, about five feet nine inches, weighs 165 pounds, dark complexion. Was conductor out of Tucson and Nogales on S. P. & Sonora R. R. for a number of years. Was in Central America ten years ago; came from there to Southern California on his way to San Francisco on a mining deal. Any information will be appreciated.—Address FRANK C. SALTER, Placentia, Calif.

HOSKINS, FRANK. Last seen in Vancouver, Canada. Any information will be appreciated.—Address SGT. ROBERT R. DAVIS, care of *Adventure.*

POWELL, MALCOLM. Was in Eagle River, Wis., in 1914. Any one knowing his whereabouts please communicate with—PRIVATE ROY L. HILLER, Co. C., 59th Inf., A. E. F.

PARKER, MR. Owned the "Dreamland" theater at Syracuse, N. Y. Last heard from in Miami, Florida, in 1914. Any information will be appreciated.—Address MAURICE BETTINGER, 133 Manilla St., Syracuse, N. Y.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

ROSE, JACK. Also known as JOHN LE MON. Was with him from Yuma, Ariz. to Liverpool, England. Any information regarding his whereabouts will be gratefully received.—Address E. R. MILLER, 1151 East 51st St., Los Angeles, Cal.

COSSES, M. ANGLE. Last heard of in Milton, Pa., in April, 1917. Mexican by birth, about five feet tall, stocky build, and dark complexion, black curly hair. Any one knowing his whereabouts please write.—Address FIRST-CLASS SERGEANT JOHN S. D. NORBER, 25th Balloon Co., A. E. F.

CONANT, HERMAN. Or his wife, Jennie B., or their sons, Harold Beecher and William Heywood. They lived in New York City in 1889 and in Denver in 1901. Any information regarding them will be gratefully received.—Address FRED W. HAWARD, Ortega, Duval County, Florida.

WUNEMBURG, WM. C. Also called BILL COOPER. About thirty-one years of age. Weighs about 165 pounds. Has blue eyes and light-brown hair. He also has a scar on the left side of forehead. May possibly be in Philadelphia. Any person knowing of his whereabouts will kindly communicate with his relatives.—Address MRS. WUNEMBURG, 454 Pacific St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

DENNISTON, THOS. GREER. (Husband.) Age thirty-eight, brown hair, blue eyes, short stature, tattoo F. S. on left arm. Last heard of Jan., 1913, in Wardner, B. C. Spoke of going to Argentine. Expert on threshing-machines, also followed dock work. Any information will be gratefully received.—Address MRS. MYRTLE DENNISTON, Rm. 40, 4522 S. Broadway, Los Angeles, Calif.

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PARROTT, THOS. D. Black hair, weight 160 pounds, about five feet seven inches in height. Last heard from at a camp in Ill. Any information concerning him will be gratefully received by his brother.—Address PRIVATE D. C. PARROTT, care of *Adventure*.

ROUP, R. A., "BLACKIE." Last heard of at Miami, Arizona. Worked as repair man for Miami Copper Co. He is a mill and repair man. This was in 1917. Any information will be gratefully appreciated.—Address HARRY VALENTINE, P. O. Box 4, Claypool, Arizona.

MARTIN, WALTER. Joined Canadian Engineers September, 1917. Last heard of—wounded—Southport, England. Please communicate with SGT. ROBERT R. DAVIS, care of *Adventure*.

KLINGER, IRVING. U. S. Marine Corps. Last seen when in Great Falls, Mont., immediately after enlisting in July, 1917. Please communicate with SGT. ROBERT R. DAVIS, care of *Adventure*.

WHEELER, HAROLD. Son. About forty years old. When last heard of, was stenographer for Dowie in Zion City, Ill. From there he went to Oregon or Montana. Shall be very grateful for any information.—Address W. R. WHEELER, 3803 East 68th St., Portland, Oregon.

GRIFFITH, CHARLIE E. Class of 1915, M. N. T. S. Ranger. Home in Cambridge, Mass. Last heard of was a quartermaster on one of the American Hawaiian S. S. Co.'s steamers. Please write—Address PRIVATE CHARLES POPE, care of *Adventure*.

BARKER, HORACE. Last seen in a small town in Missouri. He was then about thirty-five years of age. Auburn hair. Any information will be appreciated.—Address L. T. 374, care of *Adventure*.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

FLAGG, MELVIN L. Thirty-five years old. Height five feet five inches, weighs 135 pounds, black hair, dark brown eyes; index fingers of both hands distorted; occupation tool and gage maker. Is a member of Golden Rule Lodge, I. O. O. F., Los Angeles. Any one knowing of the whereabouts of this man please notify WILLIAM E. BURTON, Washington and Madison Avenues, Bridgeport, Conn.

THE following have been inquired for in full in either the Mid-July or First August issues of Adventure. They can get name of the inquirer from this magazine:

BOHINZ, JACK; Bowman, Clarence L.; Divers, John Sterling; Doyle, Michael; Duncan, George R.; Earl, John Ernest; Foley, Peter; Hoffner, Mr. and Mrs. Frederick; Izat, John; Jeffries, Charles D.; King, Vance Herold; Lentz, Geo. Theo.; Magill, Robert; McColl, John B.; Mead, Joseph T.; Morrow, Thomas; Phillips, Orrestes, C.; Reeves, Wallace; Robinson, Richard Frederick; Rundhangen, Olaf; Erickson, Bernard; Thompson, Colman; Wardell, Norman; Watson, Pvt. A. W.; Corp. Fee; Sgt. Laucatch; West, W. Carleton; Hetterich, Carl; Ferguson, Herman; Stair, John; Haman, Bruce; Wickcliff, Earl.

MANUSCRIPTS UNCLAIMED

HASTLAR GAL BREATH; Ruth Gilfillan; Jack P. Robinson; Ray Ozmer; Miss Jimmie Banks; O. B. Franklin; G. H. Bennett; Bryon Chrisholm; Wm. S. Hilles.

UNCLAIMED mail is held by Adventure for the following persons, who may obtain it by sending us present address and proof of identity.

ARNOLD, TED; Aspinartos, A.; Brady, Grover C.; Brison, Clarence F.; Bishop, L. O.; Benson, E. W.; Babcock, Lucius A.; Beaton, G. M.; Carr, Mrs. Fred; Cosby, Arthur F.; Collins, John; Casselberry, Tex.; Coles, Bobby; Campbell, Frank U.; Dorr, H. S.; Engelby, B.; Geers, Mrs.; Harvey, Ted; Hines, Joseph; Harris, Walter J.; J. C. H.; Hart, Jack; Harding, James; Harrison, Tillson L.; Heskert, Wm.; Hunt, Dan'l O'Connel; Johnson, Walter R.; Kuckaby, William; Kohn, Edward; Lee, Wm. R.; Lofler, Mrs. Harry; Leighton, Capt.; Larisy, Jack; Lee, C.; "Lonely Jock"; MacDonald, Donald Carr; MacMahon, J. A.; MacNarnee, Alva I.; Miller, B. J.; Morrisy, K. A.; McCord, P. A.; Maples, C. M.; McGraw, John; Nelson, Frank Lovell; Nichols, Leon; Norman, Cook William; Richards, Lewis S.; Reid, Raymond; Rodgers, Stewart; Reed, H. W.; Schmidt, Walter; Scott, James F.; Seaman, W. E.; Shephard, H. O.; St. John, Irving T.; Stanley, Jack; Swan, George; Taylor, Jim; Von Gelucke, Byron; Wetherell, Delos, E.; Ward, Frank B.; Williams, Bertram I.; Williams, Ray; Williams, W. P.; Western, S. S.; Yelton, Roy T.; Young, Leon.

PLEASE send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at address given us do not reach you.—Address J. E. Cox, care *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

FIRST SEPTEMBER NUMBER

Ten stirring stories the First September *Adventure* will bring you. Here are eight of them. The other two are mentioned on page 2.

HELL'S BELL — ***By T. Nichol***
Out of the fog it rings, and the captain and the crew tremble with fear.

THE LAVENDER LETTER — ***By Hapsburg Liebe***
In which the simplicity of the Tennessee mountains copes with deceit.

THE WILD AND WOOLLY EAST — ***By Russell A. Boggs***
How a .45 helps a station-agent run his station. A railroad story.

RIVER LAW — ***By W. E. Brandon***
A story of South America and the law that rules the men of the river.

PROMOTERS — ***By G. A. Wells***
Two Yanks, out of luck in Panama, decide to clean up by pulling off a fight between a man-eating Bengal tiger and a bull. Things happen.

ONCE A THIEF — ***By H. Keith Trask***
Life on a harbor junk-boat and the time young *Larry Chisholm* has getting away from it.

CIGARS, CIGARETS, CHOCOLATES AND BONBONS — ***By Thomas McMorrow***
A side-splitting tale of "the merchant" who sold much-wanted things to his American comrades in the Argonne and collected bookoo souvenirs.

SAVAGES. Conclusion — ***By Gordon Young***
"Vengeance is Mine," said *Gilbert Lang's* ring—but when he gets his revenge the ring goes into the ocean.

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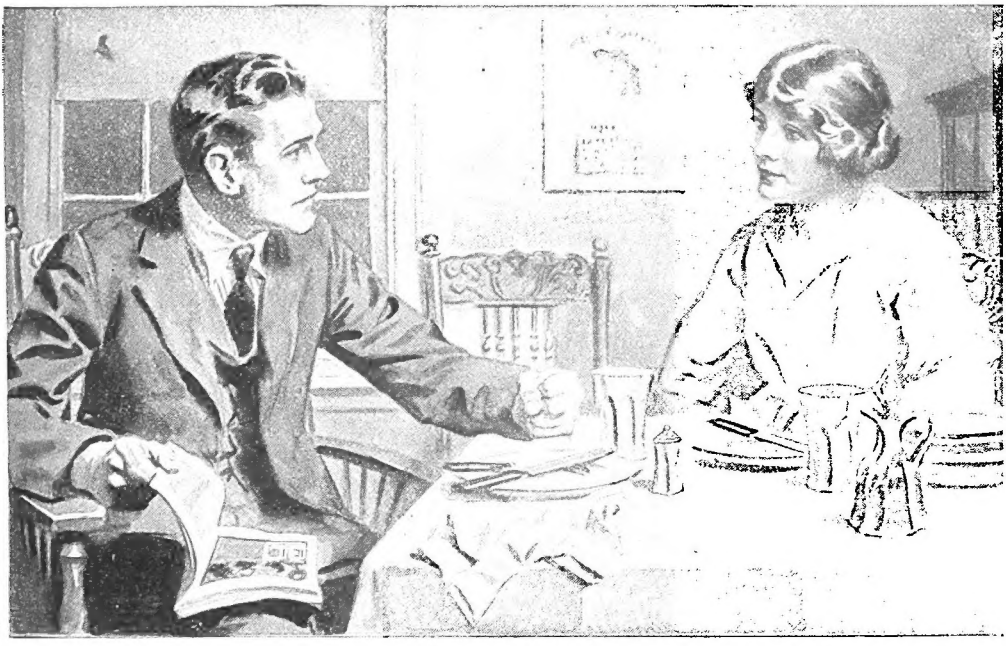

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Why don't *you* study some one thing and get ready for a real job, at a salary that will give *your* wife and children the things you would like them to have?

You can *do* it! Pick the position you want in the work you like best and the I. C. S. will prepare you for it right in your own home, in your spare time—you need not lose a day or a dollar from your present occupation.

Yes, you *can* do it! More than a million have done it in the last twenty-six years. More than 100,000 are doing it right now. Join them without another day's delay. Mark and mail this coupon!

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- ☐ Electric Lighting and Railways
- ☐ Electric Wiring
- ☐ Telegraph Engineer
- ☐ Telephone Work
- ☐ MECHANICAL ENGINEER
- ☐ Mechanical Draftsman
- ☐ Machine Shop Practice
- ☐ Toolmaker
- ☐ Gas Engine Operating
- ☐ CIVIL ENGINEER
- ☐ Surveying and Mapping
- ☐ MINE FOREMAN OR ENGINEER
- ☐ STATIONARY ENGINEER
- ☐ Marine Engineer
- ☐ Ship Draftsman
- ☐ ARCHITECT
- ☐ Contractor and Builder
- ☐ Architectural Draftsman
- ☐ Concrete Builder
- ☐ Structural Engineer
- ☐ PLUMBING AND HEATING
- ☐ Sheet Metal Worker
- ☐ Textile Overseer or Supt.
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- ☐ SALESMANSHIP
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The pain of a corn can be instantly stopped, and forever.

The corn itself can be ended completely, and usually in two days.

The method is scientific. It consists of attaching a Blue-jay plaster, forgetting the corn, and letting things take their course. The results have been proved by experience.

They have been proved to so many people that corns are now comparatively uncommon.

Corn aches are needless.

Paring corns is folly.

Old-time harsh and mussy treatments have no place today.

You will know these facts, and quickly, if you'll try a Blue-jay on one corn. Do it tonight, and the whole corn question will settle itself forever.

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